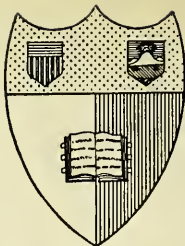


VANITY
AND
INSANITY OF GENIUS

KATE SANBORN





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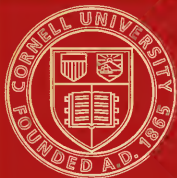
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THE
VANITY AND INSANITY
OF
GENIUS

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VANITY AND INSANITY
OF
GENIUS

BY
KATE SANBORN
AUTHOR OF "WIT OF WOMEN," "A YEAR OF SUNSHINE," ETC.

"La vanité nous agite toujours."

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

NEW YORK
GEORGE J. COOMBES
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DEDICATED
TO
THE LIVING GREAT
AS
A MIRROR

*"A man never is so honest as when he speaks well
of himself."*



PREFACE.

VANITY, like space, is illimitable and all-surrounding. I have noted one of its phases, not in an irreverent or sneering spirit, but as a study of human nature. Just as much vanity exists in commonplace men and women ; but that would make too big a book and lack the charm which Genius throws around its accompanying foibles. Universality
of vanity.

Then the vanity of nations would be a fertile and interesting theme. We are first in that regard, as we fondly fancy is the case in other directions. Sam Slick expressed the general conviction when, in chapter eighth of the "Clockmaker," he said : "I guess we are the greatest nation on the face of the earth, and the most en- The vanity
of nations.

lightened too. Our ships go ahead of the ships of other folks, our steamboats beat the British in speed, and so do our stage-coaches, and I reckon a real right-down New York trotter might stump the universe for going ahead. But since we introduced the railroads, if we don't 'go ahead,' it's a pity. We never fairly knew what going the whole hog was till then; we actilly went ahead of ourselves, and that's no easy matter, I tell you." And again: "What a beautiful night it is, beant it lovely?—I like to look up at them are stars, when I am away from home, they put me in mind of our national flag, and it is generally allowed to be the first flag in the univarse now. The British whip all the world, and we can whip the British!"

Yankee travelling in Italy.

Our boasting and bragging when in other countries have brought upon us well-deserved ridicule. We are apt to tell how high our buildings are and what an enormous sum they cost. You remember the Yankee who, on arriving in Italy, was asked if he crossed the Alps. He hesitated a little, but at length replied, "Now you men-

tion it, it seems to me I did come over some risin' ground!" and I once heard of a western orator, who proposed to destroy the naval supremacy of England, by turning the Mississippi into the Mammoth Cave and thus drying up the Atlantic.

Novalis said, "Every Englishman is an island," and Mackintosh added, "Every American is a declaration of Independence." Bulwer, in the first chapter of "England and the English," is frank and fearless in illustrating this point, saying :

"The passions are universally the same—Bulwer on England and the English. the expression of them as universally varying. The French and the English are both vain of country ; so far they are alike—yet if there be any difference between the nations more strong than another it is the manner in which that vanity is shown. The vanity of the Frenchman consists (as I have somewhere read) in belonging to so great a country ; but the vanity of the Englishman exults in the thought that so great a country belongs to himself. The root of all our notions, as of all our laws, is to be found in the sentiment of property. It is

my wife whom you shall not insult ; it is *my* house that you shall not enter ; it is *my* country that you shall not traduce ; and by a species of ultra-mundane appropriation, it is *my* God whom you shall not blaspheme.

Why the
Englishman
is vain.

“ In his own mind, the Englishman is the pivot of all things, the centre of the solar system. Like virtue herself, he

“ ‘ Stands as the sun,
And all that rolls around him
Drinks light and life and glory from his aspect.’ ”

He is vain of his country for an excellent reason—it produced Him.

“ A few months ago I paid a visit to Paris ; I fell in with a French marquis of the Bourbonite politics ; he spoke to me of the present state of Paris with tears in his eyes ; I thought it best to sympathize and agree with him ; my complaisance was displeasing ; he wiped his eyes with the air of a man beginning to take offence. ‘ Nevertheless, sir,’ quoth he, ‘ our public buildings are superb.’ I allowed the fact. ‘ We have made great advances in civilization.’ There

was no disputing the proposition. ‘Our writers are the greatest in the world.’ I was silent. ‘*Enfin*—what a devil of a climate yours is, in comparison with ours!’

After so much from an Englishman, Horace Greeley’s remarks in one of his letters from abroad may be accepted :

“I have said that the British in manner are not a winning people. Their self-conceit is the principal reason. They have solid and excellent qualities, but their self-complacency is exorbitant and unparalleled. The majority are not content with esteeming Marlborough and Wellington the greatest generals, and Nelson the first admiral the world ever saw, but claim a like supremacy for their countrymen in every field of human effort. They deem machinery and manufactures, railroads and steamboats, essentially British products. They regard morality and philanthropy as in effect peculiar to ‘the fast-anchored isle,’ and liberty as an idea uncomprehended, certainly unrealized, anywhere else. They are horror-stricken at the toleration of slavery in the United States, in seeming ignorance that

Horace
Greeley on
Englishmen.

our Congress has no power to abolish it, and that their Parliament, which *had* ample power, refused to exercise it through generations down to the last quarter of a century. They cannot even consent to go to heaven on a road common to other nations, but must seek admission through a private gate of their own, stoutly maintaining that their local Church is the very one founded by the Apostles, and that all others are more or less apostate and schismatic. Other nations have their weak points—the French, glory ; the Spaniards, orthodoxy ; the Yankees, rapacity ; but Bull plunders India and murders Ireland, yet deems himself the mirror of beneficence, and feeds his self-righteousness by resolving not to fellowship with him slaveholders of a different fashion from himself ; he is perpetually fighting and extending his possessions all over the globe, yet wondering that French and Russian ambition *will* keep the world always in hot water. Our Yankee self-conceit and self-laudation are immoderate, but nobody else is so perfect on all points—himself being the judge—as Bull.”

Nations have
their weak
points.

Yes, as a shrewd farmer said to me the other day, "Self is always the first man on parade."

Self-praise is seen in States as well as na-^{The rustic from Maine.}tions and individuals. I can laugh yet over the rustic at the Centennial who hailed from the Pine Tree State, and, surveying the main building with wonder, inquired what it was. "That is the main building," said a kindly stranger. "Wall, I thought our State would beat all the rest in build-ings, and she has!"

A Massachusetts man expresses his views in this style: "A great State. Old Massa-^{The great-ness of the State of Mas-sachusetts.}chusetts has ever taken the lead in what's great, good, useful, and profitable. She established the first school in the United States, the first academy and the first college. She set up the first press, printed the first book and the first newspaper; she planted the first apple tree, and caught the first whale; she coined the first money, and hoisted the first national flag; she made the first canal, and the first railroad; she invented the first mouse-trap, and washing-machine, and sent the first ship to discover islands and con-

tinents in the South Sea ; she produced the first philosopher, and made the first pin ; she fired the first gun in the Revolution, and gave ' John Bull ' his first beating, and put her hand first to the Declaration of Independence. She invented ' Yankee Doodle,' and gave a name forever to ' the Universal Yankee Nation.' Truly a great State."

My publisher suggested a brief preface, stating how I happened to collect and arrange this mosaic of quotations. I should enjoy doing so, but the study of egotism has made me prudent and self-denying. I will only say I do not believe any one else could have done it as well !

KATE SANBORN.



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"Vanity is so anchored in the heart of man that a soldier, sutler, cook, street porter, vapour and wish to have their admirers; and philosophers even wish the same. And those who write against it wish to have the glory of having written well; and those who read it wish to have the glory of having read well; and I, who write this, have perhaps, this desire; and perhaps those who will read this."—PASCAL

THE
VANITY OF GENIUS
FROM
PINDAR TO DICKENS





THE VANITY OF GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

IT is difficult to decide on a title for this talk ; no one word expressing the idea, for words as well as characters have such a variety of shading in their meaning. Self-consciousness, vanity, undue estimation or proper estimation unduly blazoned, colossal conceit that is simply laughable, a statement of one's superiority that all are willing to acknowledge, but somewhat too ponderous and egotistic for everyday life, a full realization of genius ; all these types must be mentioned and illustrated.

Who can wonder at conceit in the Immortals when it is so largely displayed in the humblest ranks ? Who has not met persons of most moderate attainments weighted with such an overpowering conceit that we

Various
shades and
types of
vanity.

Conceit in
the humblest
ranks.

could only stare, smile, and succumb? I recall a semi- or two-third idiot who, for reasons of family friendship, was allowed to draw a modest salary as porter in a large wholesale store, while others did most of the work. His face was at once repulsive and ridiculous; a forehead of unnatural height, eyes crossed and vacant, an immense nose, teeth of the horse variety, a lank, loose-jointed, ungainly figure, and a shambling, knock-kneed gait! Yet this unfortunate object, this being that you pitied so sincerely, had a tremendous amount of conceit. He would gravely sit and recount his usefulness, his advice to the head of the firm, suggestions which saved the establishment from ruin; and his whole air and conversation gave the impression that he felt he was wasting his time on a most inferior set of people out of pure kindness to those so far below him in insight and business sagacity. Such illusion is a blessing. And a certain amount of conceit or conviction of capacity, properly concealed, is absolutely necessary for success and comfort. "Talk about conceit as much as you like," says Dr.

Conceit desirable if not necessary.

Holmes, "it is to human character what salt is to the ocean ; it keeps it sweet and renders it endurable." Dr. Holmes' epigram on conceit.

The world is so hurried and worried, so occupied with its own affairs, that it cannot stop to supply timid talent with props and bolsters, or coax modest worth out of her corner. The advice of Horne Tooke was profound : "If you wish to be powerful, pretend to be powerful."

People are generally taken at their own estimate, and cheerful, consistent self-appreciation should not be condemned. The Rev. Dr. Cuyler felt this, when, speaking lately of the charge of egotism brought against Joseph Cook, he said : "He has no more egotism than every truly great man, who has taken his own measurement, and who speaks out the truths which God has given him to utter." Daniel Webster was not an egotist when he said in the Senate : "When any man drives me from this position, then let him talk of discomfiture—and not till then." Nor was the great Apostle an egotist when he exclaimed—"They glorified God in me."

Few realize how well they do think of themselves until it is brought out by an adroit student of human nature, or by skillful flattery, but almost every human being, high or low, is vulnerable on that point. For instance, some Frenchmen who had landed on the coast of Guinea, found a negro prince seated under a tree, on a block of wood for his throne, and three or four negroes, armed with wooden pikes for his guards. His sable majesty anxiously inquired: "Do they talk much of me in France?"

Vanity of a
negro prince.

Scottish
driver and
the Duke of
Wellington.

And I recall a story of a Scottish driver of pigs, who was led on by a waggish Englishman to talk of himself. At last, it was boldly stated by this wicked fellow that the driver was in fact a greater man than the Duke of Wellington! The stupid lout scratched his thick head, and, with a satisfied expression, replied: "Aweel, Wellington was a great mon, and verra smart in his own way; but I doot—I doot, if *he* could ha driven seven hundred pigs fra Edinboro to Lonnon—and not lose one—as *I* ha done!"

“Vanity has taken so firm hold in the heart of man,” says Pascal, “that a porter, a headman, a turnspit, can talk greatly of himself, and is for having his admirers.” And he goes on to say that the very frogs find music in their own croaking, and that the look of self-satisfaction on the face of a croaking frog is scarcely to be matched in nature. This so disgusted the saintly Pascal, that it is said he wore a girdle of spikes which he pressed into himself whenever he was conscious of vanity.

Pascal's observations.

How much truth Sir Philip Sidney expressed in the sentence: “Self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves are parties.” This truth, he says, was “driven into him” by the daily bragging of his riding-master. “When the right virtuous E. W. and I were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of Gio. Pietri Pugliano—one that, with great commendation, had the place of an esquire in his stable; and he, according to the fertility of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice,

Sir Philip Sidney's reflections and his riding master.

Sir Philip
Sidney's re-
flections, and
his riding
master.

but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplation therein, which he thought was most precious. But with none, I remember, mine ears were at any time more loaden than when (angered with our slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration) he expressed his speech in praise of his faculty. He said soldiers were the noblest of mankind, and horsemen were the noblest soldiers. He said they were the masters of war, and the ornament of peace ; speedy goers and strong abiders ; triumphers both in camps and courts ; nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred so much wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman ; skill in government was but *pedanteria* in comparison. Then would he add certain praises, by telling what a peerless beast the horse was ; the only serviceable courtier without flattery ; the beast of beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that, if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse !” And he uses this illustration to introduce his own

“Defence of Poesie.” The wise Erasmus, in his “Praise of Folly,” said :

“ We should sink without rescue into misery and despair, if we were not buoyed up and supported by Self-love, which is but the elder sister of Folly. For what is or can be more silly than to be lovers and advisers of ourselves ? And yet if we are not so, there will be no relish to any of our words or actions. Take away this one property of a fool, and the orator shall become as dumb and silent as the pulpit he stands in ; the musician shall hang up his untouched instrument on the wall ; the completest actors shall be hissed off the stage ; the poet shall be burlesqued upon his own doggerel rhymes ; the painter shall himself vanish into an imaginary landscape ; and the physician shall want food more than his patients do physic. In short, without *self-love*, instead of beautiful, you shall think yourself an old beldame of fourscore ; instead of *youthful*, you shall seem just dropping into the grave ; instead of eloquent, a stammerer—it being so necessary that every man should think well of himself be-

Defence of
self-love by
Erasmus.

fore he can expect the good opinions of others."

George
Eliot on self-
illusion.

From Erasmus and the 15th century to George Eliot is a long step, but you will find the same thought in her novel of "Amos Barton:" "We are poor plants brought up by the air-vessels of our own conceit; alas for us if we get a few pinches that empty us of that windy self-subsistence! The very capacity for good would go out of us. For, tell the most impassioned orator that his *wig* is awry, or his shirt lap hanging out, and that he is tickling people by the oddity of his person, instead of thrilling them by the energy of his periods, and you would infallibly dry up the spring of his eloquence. Let me be persuaded that my neighbor Jenkins considers me a blockhead, and I shall never shine in conversation with him any more. Let me discover that the lovely Phœbe thinks my squint intolerable, I shall never be able to fix her blandly with my disengaged eyes again. Thank heaven, then, that a little illusion is left us, to enable us to be useful and agreeable—that we don't know exactly what our friends think of us—

The effect of
disillusion.

that the world is not made of looking-glass to show us just the figure we are making, and just what is going on behind our backs ! By the help of dear, friendly illusion, we are able to dream that we are charming—and our faces wear a becoming air of self-possession. We are able to dream that other men admire our talents—and our benignity is undisturbed ; we are able to dream that we are doing much good—and—we do—a little."

But I must not wander so far from the famous men and women who are crowding around me all anxious for notice. Do you not see them ? Just at my elbow "poor Goldy" is waiting, in his fine plum-colored coat, gorgeous breeches and red vest, with an unpaid bill for sky-blue satin in his hands ; Dickens with his eye-glass, dainty boutonnière, and fastidious arrangement of hair ; Madame de Staël, with showy head-dress, displaying her beautiful arms, but like a peacock careful to conceal those big feet, about which Talleyrand made such a good pun, when she was draped as a statue. He was asked if he could distinguish the

Famous men
and women
who were
especially
vain.

author of *Corinne* among the group. "Ah," exclaimed the sarcastic diplomat, looking down, and not up at her face, "Je vois le pied de Staël!" Madame de Genlis—who acknowledged that Madame de Staël would have been a good deal of a woman, if trained and guided by her—sits behind her harp, with those soft, spiritual eyes raised effectively, and the face in profile, to display that delicate nose which was her pride; Lady Blessington and Lady Morgan, in all the consciousness of rare attractions, are making their best courtesy. Rousseau, Montaigne, Landor, lead a distinguished crowd, who grumble at being kept longer in the background, and press forward for a more prominent position.

Self-depreciation dissected by Talleyrand.

'Tis not easy to distinguish vanity from a proper self-estimate. Then, too, there is often more conceit in morbid self-depreciation than in a fair regard for one's own ability, frankly expressed. Some one has defined this foolish habit of talking about one's self in a disparaging fashion as "conceit gangrened and driven inward," and Talleyrand said: "Unbounded modesty is nothing

more than unassured vanity." Such disparagement is generally a bid for compliments, at least for contradiction, and an ingenuous satisfaction over one's success or expectation is more natural, and is often quite refreshing. Oliver Wendell Holmes says, "Apology is only egotism wrong-side out."

I like to think of Thackeray's delight over an unexpected tribute to his work. One day he was walking along Wych Street, a kind of slum thoroughfare leading to Drury Lane, when he passed a group of dirty little street Arabs. One little female tatterdemalion looked up at him as he passed, and then called out to her younger brother, "Hi, Archie! d' you know who him is? He's Becky Sharp." Thackeray was astounded to find that a little barefooted guttersnipe should know sufficient of his writings, even to confound him with one of his heroines. On inquiry he found that the little thing was the child of an actress of some education, but insufficient histrionic ability, who had gradually come down to sewing trousers for cheap tailors. She had

Thackeray
gratified by
a tribute
from the
slums.

read one or two numbers of "Vanity Fair," and on a previous occasion pointed out the author to her daughter. Thackeray found the poor woman in a garret, boiling potatoes for dinner ; she had not been able to get the whole of "Vanity Fair," but only a few odd parts. Thackeray sent her a complete set, and something to give a relish to her dinner of potatoes. "By Jove !" said Thackeray to a friend, "strange as it may seem, that little incident gave me more pleasure than if I had received a complimentary letter from his Grace the Duke of Devonshire. When your name gets down into the slums, that means fame ; you have touched bottom."

Conflicting
views of
authors.

To be honestly aware of advantages, to feel a pleasure in their possession, even, need no more be conceit, than is the swallow's confidence and pleasure in his power of flight. Hazlitt affirmed that "no great man ever thought himself so ;" a strange statement, and one that can be disproved by a host of quotations from the truly great, who were thoroughly conscious of their powers and did not hesitate to say so. Tucker-

man says that "few persons possess talent of any kind unconsciously. It seems designed by the Creator that the very sense of capacity should urge genius to fulfil its mission, and support its early and lonely efforts by the earnest conviction of ultimate success."

Homer did not write of himself, but Pindar, the Greek lyric poet, who is far Pindar's exalted opinion of his genius. enough back to begin with, had an exalted opinion of his genius and the honor he conferred on others by condescending to write about them. One can hardly read a page of his poetry without finding this ever present self-consciousness cropping out, over forty notable instances occurring in his Olympian and Pythian odes. He constantly referred to himself as an "eagle," while designating his contemporaries and rivals as "jackdaws." "There are many swift darts under my elbow within my quiver, which have a voice for those of understanding, but to the crowd, they need interpreters. He is gifted with genius who knoweth much by natural talent, but those who learnt boisterous gabbling, like jackdaws,

clamor in fruitless fashion against the divine bird of Jove."

Gray's reference to Pindar.

Gray referred to Pindar in his "Progress of Poesy :"

"Tho' he inherit
Nor the pride nor ample pinion
That the Theban Eagle bear,
Sailing with supreme dominion
Thro' the azure deep of air."

It is amusing to note in his invocation to the Deity, the manner in which he links his name with the victors in the various athletic contests : "May it be thy lot, for this time, to walk on high ; and mine, for as long a time, to live with conquerors conspicuous for poetic skill throughout the Greeks in every quarter."

"Sovereign Lord of the ocean, grant a direct course from peril to Agesias and glorify the sweet bloom of my hymns."

When beseeching that an exile who has been residing in Pindar's city during his banishment may be recalled, he says : "And, in sooth, he may tell what a fountain of ambrosial strains he found when lately entertained by me at Thebes."

“In a brief song will I make innumerable victories to shine conspicuously.”

“Let the son of Sostratus know that he has his lucky foot in this sandal, lucky because the mighty Pindar is to make him renowned by his song.”

What amazing confidence! And Pindar was right. Those old warriors only live in his verse.

Cicero was also a decided egotist. When asked of his lineage, he proudly answered : ^{Cicero's egotism.} “I commence an ancestry.” Anthony Trollope in his life of Cicero, says : “It is natural that we should judge out of his own mouth, one who left so many more words behind him than did any one else—particularly one who left words so pleasant to read. And all that he wrote was after some fashion about himself. His letters, like all letters, are personal to himself. His speeches are words coming out of his own mouth about affairs in which he was personally engaged and interested. His rhetoric consists of lessons given by himself about his own art, founded on his own experience, and on his own observation of others. His so-called

A chronicler
of minutiae.

philosophy gives us the workings of his own mind. No one has ever told the world so much about another person, as Cicero has told about Cicero. Boswell pales before him as a chronicler of minutiae. It may be a matter of small interest now to the bulk of readers to be intimately acquainted with a Roman who was never one of the world's conquerors. It may be well for those who desire to know simply the facts of the world's history, to dismiss as unnecessary, the aspirations of one who lived so long ago. But if it be worth while to discuss the man's character, it must be worth while to learn the truth about it."

Rome made
glorious by
Cicero.

Cicero said : "For all my toils and pains I have no recompense here ; but hereafter, in heaven, among the immortal gods I shall look back on my beloved city, and find my reward in seeing her made glorious by my career."

"He never suffered the Roman mind to forget the nightly vigils he had passed in guarding their liberties from the conspiring Catiline : the scene on the Capitoline Hill was never suffered to fade from the public

view. His constant cry was 'Orna me ! Orna me !' "

Ovid, in the peroration to the *Metamorphoses*, makes this statement : "I have now completed a work which neither the ire of Jove, nor flames, nor sword, nor the consuming lapse of time shall be able to destroy. When that day, which has power over this mortal frame shall desire, let it terminate the continuance of this uncertain life ; yet, in my superior being eternal I shall be exalted above the starry vault, and my name shall be immortal ; and wherever the Roman power extends over the conquered world I shall be read in every tongue, and if prophetic presagings have any truth, in fame, through all ages, I shall live."

The confidence of Ovid in his own immortality.

Horace, in his ode at close of the second book anticipating an immortal renown from his poetry, announces his immediate metamorphosis, and his speedy flight as a white-winged swan into every part of the world. And the last ode of the third book is familiar to many, especially that striking and oft-quoted line : "Non omnis moriar" (I shall not wholly die).

Horace's famous ode.

Lord Lytton translates it thus :

“I have built a monument than honor more lasting,
Soaring more high than regal pyramids,
Which nor the stealthy gnawing of the raindrops,
Nor the vain rush of Boreas shall destroy ;
Nor shall it pass away with the unnumbered
Series of ages and the flight of time.
I shall not wholly die ! from Libitina
A part, yea, much of mine own self escapes.
Renewing bloom from praise in after ages,
My growth through time shall be to fresher youth,
Long as the High Priest, with the Silent Virgin,
Ascends the sacred Capitol of Rome.”

Lord Lytton's comments.

Lord Lytton in his comments on this says : “It is written in dignified and serious confidence in the firm establishment of the poet's fame. It is unnecessary to defend Horace here from the charge of vain-glory, to which a modern poet, arrogating to himself the immortality of fame would be exposed. The manners of an age decide the taste of an age. The heathen poets spoke of the immortality of their verses with as little scruple as Christian poets speak of the immortality of their souls, not to mention the Greek poets. Dillenburger gives a tolerably long list of passages from the

Latin—Ennius, Lucretius, Virgil, Propertius, Ovid, Martial—who spoke of their conquest over time with no less confidence than Horace here does.”

How similar to this famous Ode is that sonnet of Shakespeare’s beginning,

Shakespeare’s
sonnet.

“Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme ;
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor sword of Mars, nor war’s quick fire shall burn
This living record of your memory.
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o’er-read,
And tongues to be your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead ;
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen),
When breath most breathes, even in the mouths of
men.”

Virgil, it seems to me, was much more modest in expressing his conviction of the value of his work. At the end of the Georgics, he says in the simplest way that he has been singing about fields and flocks, “sub tegmine fagi,” while Cæsar was making his proud conquests. There is in the contrast a suspicion that his quiet verses

Modesty of
Virgil.

may rival the mighty deeds of the warrior. It is very gracefully put.

Dante conscious of his power as a poet.

It is touching to review this general longing for, and struggle after, an immortal fame. Demosthenes confessed he was pleased when even a fish-woman of Athens pointed him out. Thucydides wrote his history as a possession of eternity, as Bacon bequeathed his work to future generations.

There is a curious passage in the "Purgatorio," of Dante, where the poet, after alluding to the transitory nature of literary fame and public honors, confidently predicts his own future greatness. Several writers relate that when, in 1301, the principal men in Florence conferred together in order to find some means of preventing the coming of Charles of Anjou, they resolved to send an embassy to Pope Boniface, and asked Dante to undertake the mission. "If I go," he replied, "who will be left? and if I stay behind, who is there to go?" as if he were the only person worth anything in the whole city. In the fourth canto of the "Inferno," where Dante, in the Limbo, meets with the great poets of antiquity, Homer,

Horace, Ovid, Lucan and Virgil, he tells how

“ They turned to me with signs of salutation,
And more of honor still, much more, they did me,
In that they made me one of their own band ;
So that the sixth was I, 'mid so much wit.”

The predominant character of Dante throughout the great poem is, however, a modest dignity.

Kepler wrote : “ The die is cast. I have written this book, and whether it be read by posterity or by my contemporaries, is of no consequence ; it may well wait a reader during one century, since God himself during six thousand years has not sent one observer like myself.” Kepler and his reader.

And most great minds feel what Dr. Hunter so bluntly affirmed : “ It will be a long time before this world sees another John Hunter.”

When Goethe, at his own table, acknowledged his obligations only to Shakespeare, Spinoza and Linnæus, that is, in the line of poetic genius to Shakespeare alone, and when Wordsworth, resolving to be a poet,

feared comparison only with Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, what shall we call it?

Buffon's
classification
of the great
men of his
time.

Buffon, on being asked how many really great men there were, replied, "Five—Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and myself." Buffon's vanity was so great, that at work he was always found in full dress and ruffles, and when he walked in his garden, a valet was near at hand with a pair of curling tongs and powder.

This consciousness of unusual power when it exists, is so universal that the repetition of instances would become monotonous, if the greatness of the men did not give especial interest to each added illustration. "My lord," said Chatham, "I can save this country, and no other man can," corresponding with the exclamation of Louis XIV. : "*L'état, c'est moi!*" After Gibbon's death, his private diary was found to contain his private opinion of himself and his history. "I am the greatest historian that ever lived. No one can equal me in this direction," and so on. Byron called himself the great Napoleon of rhyme, and spoke of

Gibbon's
opinion of
his history.

his loneliness as like that of the lion. Goethe said : " All I have had to do, I have done in kingly fashion. I let tongues wag as they pleased."

This is all true. Such men stand on Pisgah heights, and for them the sun shines on a land which none view but themselves ; and when one succeeds in wresting from Nature one of her primal secrets, or in expressing ideas so that they cannot die, it is not strange that he should fully estimate the achievement. Linnæus, the great naturalist, Linnæus, the great naturalist. once said that it had been granted to him to throw a glance into the secret council-chamber of God. Another curious saying of his is : " Deum, sempiternum, immensum, omniscium expergefactus a tergo transeuntem vidi et obstupui."

Ruskin, who is full of thoughts on this point, and has given us so perfectly the distinction between pride and vanity, says in his lecture on " Poetry," that he believes in the humility of greatness. " I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power or hesitation in speaking of his opinion ; but a right understanding of the relation be-

Ruskin on pride and vanity.

Albert
Dürer.

Newton.

tween what he can do and say and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it ; and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them ; only they do not think much of themselves on that account. Arnolfo knows that he can build a good dome at Florence ; Albert Dürer writes calmly to one who had found fault with his work, 'It cannot be better done.' Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled anybody else ; only they do not expect their fellow-men therefore to fall down and worship them ; they have a curious undersense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but through them, that they would not do or be anything else than God made them. And they see something divine and God-made in every other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, and incredibly merciful. Now, I find among the men of the present age, as far as I know them, this character in Scott and Turner

pre-eminently. I am not sure if it is not in them alone. I do not find Scott talking about the dignity of literature, or Turner about the dignity of painting. They do their work, feeling that they cannot well help it; the story must be told, and the effect put down; and if people like it, well and good; and if not, the world will not be much the worse. I believe a very different impression of their estimate of themselves and their doings will be received by any one who reads the conversation of Goethe and Wordsworth. The *slightest* manifestation of jealousy or self-complacency is enough to mark a second-rate character of the intellect; and I fear that, especially in Goethe, such manifestations are neither few nor slight."

One of Ruskin's characteristic letters to Alex. Mitchell, printed in "Arrows of the Chace," 1881, is impressive just here :

"What in the devil's name have you to do with either Mr. Disraeli or Mr. Gladstone? You are students at the University, and have no more business with politics than you have with rat-catching. Had you ever

Scott and
Turner.

One of
Ruskin's
emphatic
letters.

read ten words of mine [with understanding] you would have known that I care no more [either] for Mr. Disraeli or Mr. Gladstone than for two old bagpipes with the drones going by steam, but that I hate all Liberalism as I do Beelzebub, and that, with Carlyle, I stand, we two alone now in England, for God and the Queen. . . .”

Ruskin on himself.

Ruskin recently observed, “Only five men in modern times have a full sense of material beauty in inanimate nature, namely, Rousseau, Shelley, Byron, Turner, and myself ;” an interesting addition to his remarks on humility. It is certain, moreover, that with his strict limits, almost every man would be relegated to the second rank.

Goethe's early self-appreciation and love of distinction.

Geniuses often seem to realize their supremacy, even in childhood. An anecdote related of Goethe by Bettina von Arnim is *apropos*. “One day his mother seeing him cross the street with his comrades, was amused with the gravity of his carriage, and asked laughingly if he meant to distinguish himself from his companions? The little fellow replied, ‘I begin with this—later on I shall distinguish myself in

other ways.'” On another occasion, he plagued her with questions, as to whether the stars would perform all they had promised at his birth. “Why,” said she, “must you have the assistance of the stars, when other people get on very well without?” “I am not to be satisfied with what does for other people,” said the juvenile Jupiter.

Hans Andersen, a lovable character, of crystal innocence and colossal conceit, constantly tells us in his charming autobiography of his conviction of future fame.

Andersen's
harmless
vanity.

After saving a little sum of money, he besought his mother not to apprentice him to a tailor, as she had intended, but allow him to make a journey to Copenhagen that he might see the greatest city in the world.

His journey
to Copen-
hagen.

“‘What wilt thou do there?’ asked the mother. ‘I will be famous,’ returned I, and I then told her all I had read about extraordinary men. ‘People have,’ said I, ‘at first an immense deal of adversity to go through, and then they will be famous.’ It was a wholly unintelligible impulse that guided me. I wept, I prayed, and at last my mother consented, after having first sent

for a so-called wise woman out of the hospital that she might read my future fortune by the coffee-grounds and cards. 'Your son will become a great man,' said the old woman, 'and in honor of him Odense will one day be illuminated.'"

Prophecy of
future fame.

How interesting to note, at the close of his life, that this old prophecy was more than fulfilled. For after all sorts of honors during the day, a diploma as an honorary citizen, public buildings decorated with flags and flowers ; speeches, cheers, original songs full of his praise ; addresses, all about his struggles and his success, dancing by the children, even a congratulatory telegram from the king ; then, at evening, came the great torchlight procession, in which all the corporations of the town, with their colors, took part. A rare and beautiful festival !

Professor
Boyesen on
Andersen.

Professor Boyesen, in an article on Andersen, says : " He had the harmless vanity of a child who has a new frock on. He was fidgety and unhappy if anybody but himself was the centre of attraction ; and guilelessly happy when he could talk and be admired and sympathized with. His talk

was nearly always about himself, or about the king and princes and lofty personages who had graciously deigned to take notice of him. And that marvellous little tale, 'The Ugly Duckling,' who can read it without perceiving that it is a subtle, most exquisite revenge which the poet is taking upon the humdrum Philistine world, which despised and humiliated him before he lifted his wings and flew away with the swans, who knew him as their brother?"





CHAPTER II.

Autobiog-
raphy and
memoirs.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY is generally most attractive reading. And it seems natural that a man's life should enter into his writings. A novelist especially is often identified with his heroes. Lord Lytton, Dickens, Thackeray, have all written their memoirs in their works of fiction. Poets and philosophers have done the same.

How forcibly is his unhealthy and morbid state of mind shown in Poe's writings ; we need no other biography of him.

Character of
Chopin's
composi-
tions.

Even in Chopin's brilliant compositions we trace the sad and unhappy vein which ran through his nature, and are reminded in his music of the yearnings of a restless soul which found little satisfaction in the excitement of a French court. The minor strains haunt us, suggesting diplomatic intrigues, ungoverned passion, and the final

weariness of all things expressed in music weirdly beautiful. If we could translate clearly his wild strains, we should have the soul of Chopin.

Self-centred authors display themselves with unmistakable clearness in their works. Disraeli both unconsciously and designedly made himself the conspicuous figure in all his novels ; unconsciously, in that his egoism protrudes itself into the minutest details, exhibiting aversions and preferences. As a popular American lecturer has said of him : " Disraeli is seen through all his novels, early and late ; an exquisite dandy in the first, with gorgeous toilettes and shining pumps, his waistcoat lined with rose-color to give a faint flush to his sallow complexion. In 'Endymion,' we see him in his progress through life with his friends and enemies portrayed, and his secrets of success and persistence in winning a given goal, no matter how improbable ; a selfish immobility as regards others, and an admiration for women who are sufficiently powerful to help him."

Disraeli a conspicuous figure in his own novels.

With a self-admiration that has no paral-

lel in the history of fiction, Lady Morgan made herself the heroine of many of her novels.

Conscious
and uncon-
scious por-
trayal in
novelists.

This blending of the conscious and unconscious portrayal of self, which is seen in nearly all novelists, is shown in the various writings of Miss Phelps, especially in "Gates Ajar," where she told her own heart-trouble, and all her stories since have a wail in them which is readily understood by one acquainted with her personal history.

Lamartine.

The most successful novels have been those founded directly upon the author's experiences. Lamartine says, in "Twenty-five Years of my Life," that "Graziella" was a true experience of his own, and that its success was due to its truth to nature.

Thomas
Hughes.

Thomas Hughes has repeatedly denied that he drew his own portrait in the incomparable "Tom Brown at Rugby," but no one believes him. At any rate, he so vividly lived over his experiences, and threw himself with such power into the character of "Tom Brown," that he unconsciously set himself forth in unmistakable identity.

Lytton.

Bulwer Lytton's "Ernest Maltravers" con-

tains his views on art and life, and on that account has ever been a favorite with his more thoughtful readers. We find Dickens' autobiog-
raphy in "David Copperfield." Dickens.
Fielding's "Amelia" was his own wife exactly described; George Sand detailed her
liaison with Alfred de Musset in "Elle et George
Lui;" Thackeray put himself into all his Sand.
works.

This subject has been oddly neglected, considering its interest. I know of nothing which bears directly upon the idea that novelists are their own biographers, making themselves their own heroes; one of the many phases of Vanity.

The Ego lurks in every great work. Vir-
gil shows his egotism in this line, "Sum
pius Æneas, fama super æthera notus." Virgil.
How eloquent was Demosthenes when he
defended himself! Bacon once addressed
his king in this fashion: "I know that I am
censured of some conceit of my ability or
worth, but I pray your majesty impute it to
desire—'possunt quia posse videntur.'"

The egotism of letter-writers is another
department of this manifold theme.

History of
vanity and
great men.

To write a history of Vanity would be to write the history of the greatest men. Burton speaks of the love of praise as a malady, he might better have called it an epidemic. From his "Anatomy of Melancholy," a treasury of quotations, quaint and curious, I take several instances :

Love of
praise in
antiquity.

"Pliny doth ingenuously confess to his dear friend Augurinus, 'All thy writings are most acceptable, but those especially that speak of me.' And to Maximus, 'I cannot express how pleasing it is to me to hear myself commended.' That which Cicero writ to Atticus is still in force. 'There was never yet true poet nor orator that thought any other better than himself.' Epicurus, writing to a minister of state, declares, 'If you desire glory, nothing can bestow it better than the letters I write to you.'"

Epicurus
and others.

"The very minute testament of Epicurus preserved by Diogenes Laertius, is characteristic, and exhibits at once his kindly disposition and his self-conceit. . . . He directed that a portion of the interest of his property should be devoted to the annual celebration of his birthday, and to cover the

expense of a feast on the twentieth of each month, in honor of him and his friend Metrodorus. This proposition Cicero severely ^{Cicero.} criticises, partly on the ground of vanity and inconsistency with the teaching of one who professed to hold that nothing pertains to us after death, and partly on the ground that a philosopher, and especially a physicist, ought to know that the idea of an annual birthday is all nonsense."

In fact, most authors are like the old divine, who put all men into two great classes, to wit: those who had read his book and those who had not!

When authors beg for your honest criticism, be prudent, they desire your praise. You remember the old bishop in "Gil Blas," who said to his nephew, "I'm getting old and my sermons are not what they used to be," and the foolish boy frankly and truthfully agreed that there was a falling off, whereupon the worthy old prelate flew into a rage, exclaiming, "You lie, you dog, you know I write as well as I ever did!"

How capitably Sheridan takes up this ^{Sheridan's} "Critic."

weakness in "The Critic," in the person of *Sir Fretful Plagiary*.

"*Sir Fretful*. But come now, there must be something that you think might be amended, hey? Mr. Sneer, has nothing struck you?

"*Sneer*. Why, faith, it is but an ungracious thing for the most part—to——

"*Sir Fret*. With most authors, it is just so indeed—they are in general strangely tenacious! But, for my part, I am never so well pleased as when a fastidious critic points out any defect to me; for what is the purpose of showing a work to a friend if you don't mean to profit by his opinion.

"*Sneer*. Very true. Why then, though I seriously admire the picce upon the whole, yet there is one small objection which, if you will give me leave, I'll mention.

"*Sir Fret*. Sir, you can't oblige me more.

"*Sneer*. I think it wants incident.

"*Sir Fret*. You surprise me! wants incident!

"*Sneer*. Yes: I own I think the incidents are too few.

"*Sir Fret*. Believe me, Mr. Sneer, there is no person for whose judgment I have a more implicit deference. But I protest to you, Mr. Sneer, I am only apprehensive that the incidents are too crowded. My dear Dangle, how does it strike you?

"*Dangle*. Really, I can't agree with my friend Sneer. I think the plot quite sufficient, and the first four acts by many degrees the best I ever read or saw in

my life. If I might venture to suggest anything, it is that the interest *falls off* in the fifth.

“*Sir Fret.* *Rises,* I believe you mean, sir——

“*Dangle.* No, I don’t, upon my word.

“*Sir Fret.* Yes, yes, you do—upon my soul—it certainly don’t fall off, I assure you. No, no, it don’t fall off.

“*Dangle.* Now, Mrs. Dangle, didn’t you say it struck you in the same light?

“*Mrs. Dangle.* No, indeed, I did not. I did not see a fault in any part of the play from the beginning to the end.

“*Sir Fret.* Upon my soul, the women are the best judges after all.”

Among Frenchmen there is no lack of vanity. Voltaire is a notable instance. There is yet preserved at his villa at Ferney a large picture planned by himself, and painted by a wretched artist, in the foreground of which stands Voltaire holding the “*Henriade*,” which he is presenting to Apollo, who has just descended from Olympus to receive it. The background is the temple of Memory, toward which flies Fame, at the same time pointing to the “*Henriade*.” The Muses and the Graces are surrounding Voltaire, and are carrying

Vanity of
the French—
Voltaire.

The Henri-
ade.

his bust to the temple of Memory. The heroes and heroines of the "Henriade" are standing astonished at his wonderful talents; the authors who wrote against him are falling into the infernal regions, which gape to receive them and their works, while Envy and her Imps are expiring at his feet. He could not endure to have any flaws picked in his writings, and was so enraged by the criticism of a circle of friends upon his "Henriade" that he threw the manuscript into the fire, from which it was snatched instantly and so preserved. (Sensitiveness to criticism is another phase of this disease. From Tasso to Keats authors have been killed or driven mad or desperate by criticism.)

Voltaire on
Hamlet.

Voltaire's jealousy of Shakespeare was most marked. He said, "It was I who first showed to the French a few pearls that I had found in this enormous dung-heap." You remember his account of "Hamlet?" "It is a gross and barbarous piece, which would not be endured by the vilest populace of France or Italy. Hamlet goes crazy in the second act; his mistress goes crazy

in the third. The prince kills the father of his mistress, pretending to kill a rat. They dig a grave on the stage, the grave-diggers say abominably gross things, holding the skulls of the dead in their hands. Hamlet replies in answers no less disgusting and silly than theirs. During this time Polonius is conquered by one of the actors. Hamlet, his mother and father-in-law, drink together on the stage ; they sing, quarrel, fight, and kill each other. One would think this play the work of the imagination of a drunken savage ! ”

Madame de Genlis, while at Geneva visited Voltaire ; she had from a child disliked him for his infidel sentiments, but still desired his admiration. “ It was the custom for ladies to become agitated, grow pale, and even to faint on seeing Voltaire ; they threw themselves into his arms, stammered and wept and adored.” This was the etiquette of a presentation at Ferney, so that ordinary courtesy seemed almost a slight. But Voltaire, perceiving her perplexity, kissed her little hand, and the agony was over. She writes : “ During the whole time

Voltaire and
Madame de
Genlis.

of dinner Voltaire was far from agreeable. He seemed always in a passion with his servants, crying out to them with such strength of lungs that I often started involuntarily." But it was the result of habit, and the servants did not mind it in the least. He gave her a drive through the village, to see the houses he had built and the benevolent establishments founded by him. Such gross flattery as he had received had spoiled him. He regarded himself as an oracle, and could not brook contradiction or criticism. He seemed disturbed by the divinity and power of Christ, as is seen in his oft-quoted sentence, "Écrasez l'infâme." "I am tired," he declared, "of hearing that twelve men were sufficient to found Christianity. I will show the world that one is sufficient to destroy it."

Piron and
Voltaire.

How comical to read after all this that Piron, when advised to make some corrections in a tragedy, as Voltaire had consented to revise his work, exclaimed, "There is a great difference between the persons. Voltaire is an embroiderer, while I make figures in bronze!"

The “Confessions” of Rousseau begin in this manner: “I have entered on a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean to present my fellow-mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature, and this man shall be myself. . . . I am not made like any other one I have been acquainted with; perhaps like no one in existence. . . . Whenever the last trumpet shall sound I will present myself before the sovereign Judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these were my thoughts, such was I. . . . Power eternal! assemble round thy throne an innumerable throng of my fellow mortals, let them listen to my Confessions, let them blush at my depravity, let them tremble at my sufferings; let each in its turn expose with equal sincerity, the failings, the wanderings of his heart, and, if he dare, aver, *I was better than that man.*”

Rousseau's
confessions.

Instances of this sort could be cited until my pen was worn out, as well as my readers.

Alexandre Dumas, in order to celebrate the opening of a new house, had a drama

Modesty of
Dumas.

composed and acted, entitled, "Shakespeare and Dumas," and it was considered unusually modest that he didn't put it "Dumas and Shakespeare."

Lamartine, after extolling his mother's beauty and rare qualities of mind and heart, added naïvely that he was considered to resemble her closely.

The most beautiful poem in French.

Another French writer asked one of his friends what he thought of his last new poem. "I have reached the eighteenth canto," said he, "and do not hesitate to affirm that I have never read more beautiful or harmonious poetry in the French language." "I beg your pardon," replied the author, "there is *one* thing in the language which I must confess is superior." "Oh, perhaps you mean Phèdre or Athalie?" "No, I mean my nineteenth canto!"

Victor Hugo
"goes for"
the Deity.

Victor Hugo possibly exceeded all others when, in his poem "L'Année Terrible," he paints with startling rhetoric the possibility that God may at last be found to have deceived us all along; that the moral cosmos may be reduced to a chaos, and man, the sport of destiny, expire in a ruined universe.

And this is the central point, the idea which stands out for our strength and solace, that Hugo himself may be relied upon to chase and catch the recalcitrant Deity, and to overawe Him by the majesty of his personal appearance and the eloquence of his rebuke. "I shall go for him," is the first statement.

J'irais, je le verrais, et je le saisisrais
Dans les cieux, comme on prend un loup dans les forêts,
Et terrible, indigné, calme, extraordinaire
Je le dénoncerais à son propre tonnerre !

He was good enough, when on his death-bed, to announce that he believed in God, and this patronizing recognition of the Almighty by so great a Frenchman seems to have filled his countrymen with admiration.

As a burlesque of Victor Hugo's intense self-consciousness the *Weimarische Zeitung* assumes that on his recent birthday anniversary Prince Bismarck received the following letter from Victor Hugo : "The giant greets the giant ; the foe, the foe ; the friend, the friend ! I hate thee furiously because thou hast humbled France ; I love thee be-

Victor
Hugo's style
imitated and
burlesqued.

cause I am greater than thou art. Thou wert silent when the bell in the tower of my fame struck my eightieth year. I speak when the stolen clock on thy writing-table unwillingly announces to thee that thou hast entered the seventies. I am eighty, thou art seventy! Nay, I am eight; thou art seven; and mankind is the cipher behind each of us; were we allied as one man, history would cease. Thou art the body; I am the soul; thou art the cloud, I am the lightning; thou art the might, I am the fame! Who is greater, victor or vanquished? Neither. The poet is greater than either, for he celebrates both. Great men are only what the poet makes them. Great men appear to be what they make themselves. Yet thou art great, for thou knowest not fear. Therefore I, the poet, stretch forth a hand to thee, the great one. France sways, Germany shakes, Europe trembles, the world totters. We only are firm. I wink, thou winkest; and the grand fact, the eternal pacification of the nations, is accomplished!"

Victor Hugo
as an artist.

With all this, this truly great genius

realized the transient quality of fame, and on one of his strange drawings for the illustration of his "Toilers of the Sea" he wrote: "On the face of this cardboard I have sketched my own destiny—a steamboat tossed by the tempest in the midst of the monstrous ocean; almost disabled, assaulted by foaming waves, and having nothing left but a bit of smoke which people call glory, which the wind sweeps away and which constitutes its strength."

A writer for London *Truth* says: "Many legends are current about the atmosphere of incense in which Victor Hugo has always lived, about the theatrical surroundings in which he used to receive homage, and about the apocalyptic language in which he expressed the consciousness of his genius. These stories are not without a considerable substratum of truth, and the poet's satellites were the first to amuse themselves discreetly at his expense in the familiarity of unofficial conversation. But it must be remembered that the man who was invariably addressed as 'dear and illustrious,' or 'sublime master,' was the last of his generation; that

Homage
paid to
Victor Hugo
by his
countrymen.

Victor Hugo.

he stood vigorous and erect on the ruins of almost a century, and that he had buried all his adversaries, even to a Napoleon. He had become deity and prophet, thanks to a remnant of Latin idolatrous tendencies in his countrymen. The crown of laurels had been placed upon the brow of the marble effigy under the very eyes of the living model, on a memorable occasion, at the Comédie Française. No man, not even Goethe, ever enjoyed so much glory, and so uninterruptedly. The wonder rather is that he remained charming and affable in spite of everything, for it is possible to cite more traits of simplicity than of pomposity in his life, which is only two years younger than the century. Then to think how immense his glory really is ! After all, where is the merit, much less the use of, dwelling upon the littleness of great men ? Victor Hugo's principle of life was summed up in a famous maxim, 'Le talent est une magistrature ; le génie est un sacerdoce.' And as Louis Blanc once said : 'If there is anything grander than Victor Hugo's genius, it is the use which he has made of it.'"

Balzac's vanity is constantly revealed in his letters. Here it becomes a force which leads a man to reckon himself among the four greatest heroes of his age. It develops a kind of monomania leading to utter absorption in his own affairs, in his literary ambition, and, above all, in calculations as to the number of francs into which his genius can be coined.

Balzac's
vanity and
ambition.

The proposition to erect a statue in honor of Balzac has called out many stories of the great writer, some illustrating his literary vanity. "There are only three writers of the French language—Victor Hugo, Theophile Gautier, and myself!" he used to say proudly. On one occasion he was at a dinner where a young writer said before him: "We other men of letters." Balzac broke out into a laugh and cried: "You, sir! you a literary man! What a pretension! What foolish assurance! You compare yourself to us? Do you forget, sir, with whom you have the honor of sitting? With the marshals of modern literature!"

Carolus Duran, the painter, is not a victim of inordinate modesty. He is reputed

Artist's van-
ity—Duran.

to have summed up the universe of art in the trinity, "Moi, Dieu et Velasquez!" and he often gazes at himself, reflected in a mirror, exclaiming, in tones of fervent admiration, "It is the torso of an Apollo!"

Kneller.

It was, I think Sir Godfrey Kneller who, on being asked by an inquiring friend if he could not have greatly improved upon the works of the Creator, had his advice been asked in time, promptly replied, "Mein Gott! I think so."

M. Rénan's
opinion of
F. de Les-
seps.

But what was merely a dream to the estimable Sir Godfrey, has become, according to a distinguished compatriot, a reality to M. Ferdinand de Lesseps. In his oration to the French Academy lately, on the occasion of M. de Lesseps' reception by that august body, M. Rénan remarked: "You will continue in the valley of Jehoshaphat your rôle of the charmer; and as for the Great Judge, you will easily win him over to your side. You have improved his work, and he will assuredly be content with you."

It is certainly a curious phase of the Gallic character that the greatest Frenchmen are so often unable to separate the sublime from

the ridiculous, not to say blasphemous. Imagine M. Rénan seriously forecasting a scene between the Almighty and M. de Lesseps, in which the former tendered his hearty congratulations to the latter for having dug the Suez Canal. I wonder, too, what Mr. Ruskin will have to say to the notion that that pestilential, if convenient, sewer is an improvement upon nature. Rénan and Suez Canal.

After all this, I presume almost every one will admit that we have had at times a conviction that, as a friend suggests, we should at least have made good health contagious and small-pox—not so.

For the sake of a little pretence of method and regularity in this display of vanity among distinguished persons, let us begin with the first great name in English literature and run rapidly down the long list. Vanity in distinguished persons.

Chaucer seems free from this taint. An open-hearted, lovable man, full of sympathy with humanity and nature, delightfully unconscious of self. Spenser was always whining about his bad fortune and lack of royal favor, and was one of Elizabeth's most fulsome flatterers, but could not be called Chaucer free from the taint.

conceited, although he thought "the poet's praise immortal." Shakespeare was above all such weakness (except in a solitary instance); not so Bacon, who called his "Instauratio" "the Greatest birth of Time."

Ben Jon-
son's spite-
ful odes.

Ben Jonson was vain, irascible, and jealous. When one of his comedies failed to please, he wrote an ode to himself as follows :

Say that thou pour'st them wheat,
And they will acorns eat ;
'Twere simple fury still thyself to waste
On such as have no taste !
Whose appetites are dead !
No ! give them grains their fill,
Husks, draff to drink or swill :
If they love lees and leave the lusty wine,
Envy them not, their palate's with the swine.

Sweepings do as well
As the best ordered meal ;
For who the relish of these guests will fit,
Needs set them but the alms-basket of wit.

But when they hear thee sing
The glories of thy King
His zeal to God and his just awe o'er men,
They may, blood-shaken, then
Feel such a flesh-quake to possess their powers,
As they shall cry, "Like ours,

In sound of peace or wars,
No harp e'er hit the stars,
In tuning forth the acts of his sweet reign,
And raising Charles his chariot 'bove his Wain."

And in another ode to Himself he expresses his disgust with common poets and full appreciation of his own superiority :

What though the greedy fry
Be taken with false baits
Of worded balladry,
And think it poesy?
They die with their conceits,
And only piteous scorn upon their folly waits.
Then take in hand thy lyre ;
Strike in thy proper strain,
With Japhet's line aspire
Sol's chariot, for new fire
To give the world again :
Who aided him, with thee, the issue of Jove's brain.

And Herrick, the poet-parson, who lived with "Prew his maid," and fed his pig from a silver basin, and sang equally well in amatory strains or his Noble Numbers, fully appreciated his own talent, and has told us so frankly in that poem named Herrick
aware of his
own merits.

“HIS POETRIE HIS PILLAR.”

Only a little more
I have to write ;
Then I'll give o'er
And bid the world Good Night.

'Tis but a flying minute
That I must stay
Or linger in it ;
And then I must away.

O Time, that cut'st down all !
And scarce leav'st here
Memoriall
Of any men that were.

How many lye forgot
In Vaults beneath ?
And piece-meale rot
Without a fame in death ?

Behold this living stone,
I rear for me,
Ne'r to be throwne
Downe, envious Time, by thee.

Pillars let some set up,
(If so they please)
Here is my hope,
And my *Pyramides*.

One cannot help thinking what pleasure Herrick. it would have given the genial Robert to have had a peep in a vision at the luxurious edition of his selected poems so exquisitely, so sympathetically illustrated by Abbey. Herrick was rich in personal magnetism, individuality, and a warmth of "atmosphere" which Spenser utterly lacked, as he sang melodiously and mellifluously of the land of Nowhere. His "*Faerie Queene*" has no local habitation, and he and his writings are comparatively laid aside ; some one compares them to a cardinal virtue, well spoken of, but seldom used ; while Herrick's *Primroses* are still wet with morning dew, and the glittering and gay vibration of his *Julia's* clothes still inspires the artist.

Milton had a noble pride—a conviction of Milton's noble pride. his pre-eminence, which all concede him the right to announce. Even in youth he assumed the station which his superior endowment gave him. He was not, as Aubrey slyly observes, "ignorant of his own parts." In a smaller man, his self-esteem would have amounted to vanity. Coleridge says : "In the '*Paradise Lost*'—indeed in every one

of his poems—it is Milton himself whom you see ; his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve—are all John Milton ; and it is a sense of this intense egotism that gives one the greatest pleasure in reading Milton's works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit."

Salmasius.

As Salmasius, Milton's great opponent, was conversing one day in the royal library with Gaulmin and Maussac, "I think," said Gaulmin, "that we three can match our heads against all that is learned in Europe." To this Salmasius replied : "Add to all that there is learned in Europe yourself and M. de Maussac, and I can match my single head against the whole of you."

Dryden's
opinion of
his own
plays.

Dryden was vain, especially proud of his "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," and, when congratulated on its brilliancy, he replied, "You are right ; a nobler ode was never produced and will never be." He fancied he could improve the tales of Chaucer, which no one has ever succeeded in doing, and verily thought his own plays superior to Shakespeare's, attempting to improve the "Tempest," and even tampered with "Paradise

Lost," although in his famous tribute to Milton he placed him above both Homer and Virgil.

Addison was too truly the gentleman to obtrude his conceit upon the world, if indeed he had any. And who can blame the poor, crooked, suffering little invalid, Pope, who was so often laughed at and cruelly attacked, for revenging himself with his pen, and feeling exultant at its power to punish :

Pope exultant in the satirical power of his pen.

"I know I'm proud—
I must be proud to see
Men, not afraid of God, afraid of me."

Who can blame him for his keen delight in seeing how deeply his scorn-winged arrows had pierced the hearts of his enemies? If he was a wasp, he never stung until thoroughly exasperated. How pathetic was Swift's honest exclamation, during those last sad days of solitude and agony as he reviewed "The Tale of a Tub," "My God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book!"

Swift in his last sad days.

Johnson, the hippopotamus of literature,

Dr. Johnson's opinion.

uttered his one-sided prejudiced opinions with the certainty that, when he had spoken, the question was settled forever. But how little would be left of his intellectual ponderosity, if it were not for the despised Boswell who made his immortality by the best and most vital biography ever written? There would have been an obsolete dictionary, some solemn, turgid essays, which no person in their right mind would take up for pleasure; Rasselas, an absurdly stilted tale, in which the stately Samuel masquerades throughout the whole volume in oriental gait, his scorched wig sticking out from under the turban, and literary criticisms, which are not reliable, so deeply tinged were they with his own prejudices. He wrote some grand lines of poetry, but not many.

Boswell's life.

Goldsmith's vanity and desire to shine in company.

Goldsmith's vanity, harmless, genial, ludicrous, makes one love him the more. Irving judges his foibles much more leniently than Croker who represents him as ridiculously vain, strutting about in fine clothes, utterly unsuited to his purse or position, jealous of the applause earned by others for

arts in which he could have no pretensions to excel, jealous even of a puppet, dexterously tossing a pike. "Pshaw! I can do it better myself!" he said, and afterwards went home with Mr. Burke to supper and broke his shin in attempting to exhibit to the company how much better he could jump over a stick than the puppet. Burke teased him cruelly. Once while walking together they noticed a number of people staring at some foreign women gayly dressed, who were standing at a window. Burke insisted at dinner that Goldsmith exclaimed in a disgusted tone: "What stupid beasts the crowd must be to stare with such admiration at these painted Jezebels while a man of my talent passed unnoticed;" and Goldsmith at last acknowledged that something of that sort had passed through his mind, but he had no idea that he had said it aloud. He had an unconquerable desire to shine in every company and upon every subject. Yet who can even think with severity of this homely, dumpy Irishman, full of brogue and blunder who was so warm-hearted and lovable.

Burke and
Goldsmith.

Young's
self-con-
sciousness.

Young strikes one as the most self-conscious man in English literature, always posing for effect, struggling for a bishopric while affectedly sighing for retirement. His would-be sublimity often approaches bombastic unmeaningness, but he never saw this. Mrs. Chapone said of him: "I cannot help lamenting that he should have blundered so egregiously as to fancy himself a poet. Sure never was sense so entangled in briars as his! Instead of the flowers of language, his thoughts are wrapt up in thorns and thistles. I am sure it has cost me much toil and pains to untwist them, and to say the truth, I like them as I do gooseberries, well enough when they are picked for me: but not well enough to gather them."

George
Eliot on
Young.

George Eliot fairly despised Young's artificiality and solemn egotism. She declares that the God of the "Night Thoughts," is simply Young himself "writ large"—a didactic poet, who "lectures" mankind in the antithetic hyperbole of mortal and immortal joys, earth and the stars, hell and heaven, and expects the tribute of inexhaustible

“applause.” Young has no conception of religion as any thing else than egoism turned heavenward; and he does not merely imply this, he insists on it. . . . And his ethics corresponds to his religion—he never changes his level so as to see beyond the horizon of mere selfishness. Sometimes he insists, as we have seen, that the belief in a future life is the only basis of morality; but elsewhere he tells us—

“In self-applause is virtue’s golden price.”

Vanity of the most ludicrous and preposterous variety attacked the “Lakers.” Southey read his *Madoc* to Shelley and assured him it was equal to the *Odyssey*, and he one day enticed him into his library under the delusion that he had a treat for him, *locked the door* and dosed him with his verses until he fell asleep under the table. He said modestly that while his contemporaries were sowing kidney beans, he was planting acorns.

“I shall be read,” said Southey, “by posterity, if I am not read now; read with Milton and Virgil and Dante, when poets

Vanity of the
Lake Poets.
Southey.

Southey and
posterity.

whose works are now famous will only be known through a biographical dictionary." The witty Porson hearing him run on in this strain observed, "I will tell you sir, what I think of your poetical works: they will be read when Shakespeare's and Milton's are forgotten—but not till then!"

Southey as
an historian.

He did not dread a comparison with Aristot. "My proportion of ore to dross is greater." As a historian he ranked himself above Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, and flattered himself that his History of Brazil would, in more points than one, be compared with Herodotus.

Southey said of Hannah More that, "She was born with a birch rod in her hand, and worst of all was a shameless flatterer and insatiable of flattery," but he shows a childish annoyance at the non-appearance of his name in her life. This astonishes him, as he "dined with her at Cowslip Hall, and called upon her at Bath in the winter of the same year."

Words-
worth's con-
ceit.

Wordsworth, though a grand, simple-hearted old man, had a conceit which was ludicrous. Sometimes when he met a little

child, he would stop and ask the boy or girl to observe him carefully and not forget his face and appearance, so that they might say in after years "they had seen the great Wordsworth."

Auerbach had the same habit. Of his stout belief in his own powers and approbation of his own work, many amusing stories are told by the Germans. "Every year Auerbach visits three or four fashionable watering-places, at each of which the following episode occurs at least thirty times : The novelist indulges in small talk with the little children of the natives, and invariably ends the conversation thus : ' Knowest thou who has been talking with thee ? Berthold Auerbach. Tell that at home ! ' "

Auerbach
shows him-
self off to
children.

At a dinner-party, where the conversation turned upon wit and witty people, Wordsworth said : " Gentlemen, I was never witty but once in my life." Of course he was begged to relate the bright, but solitary instance, which he willingly gave. " I was standing at the door of my cottage on Rydal Mount one summer morning, when a laborer passing by, inquired, ' Have you

Words-
worth's
brilliant
witticism.

seen my wife go by?' I replied, 'my good friend, I didn't know until this moment that you had a wife.'" The company waited for the witticism a few seconds, then it was clear to them that he had finished and they burst into a general roar, which he took complacently as a compliment to his brilliancy.

Taine on
Words-
worth.

Taine has some scathing criticisms on Wordsworth, condemning the conceit of the poet in thinking he could by his genius elevate the meanest subject, and that wherever he walked a poem must be made to tell his dream. Miss Simcox had the same idea when she wrote : "And the conclusion I came to about Wordsworth was that he might be very good reading for ladies and gentlemen who had never felt anything like the French Revolution themselves. I never liked Shelley so well as when he saw through Peter Bell the Second and his

" 'Dim recollections
Of pedlars tramping on their rounds ;
Milk pans and pails and odd collections
Of saws and proverbs and reflections
Old parsons make in burying-grounds.' "

“Burns, Shelley, were with us,” so Brown-
ing says : “but Wordsworth— I should
have liked to tell him to his solemn face
that shepherds, pedlars, mad women and all,
were good for something more than figures
in a landscape, for—*him* to feel wise and
good in looking at !”

Browning
on Words-
worth.

Byron, in “English Bards and Scotch Re-
viewers,” says of him :

Byron's
epigram on
Words-
worth.

“Who, both by precept and example, shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose.”

“Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
The idiot mother of ‘an idiot boy ;’
A moon-struck, silly lad, who lost his way,
And, like his bard, confounded night with day ;
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,
And each adventure so sublimely tells,
That all who view the ‘idiot in his glory,’
Conceive the bard the hero of the story.”

Wordsworth never read any poetry but
his own, doubtless on the principle of the
man who talked constantly to himself, be-
cause—he enjoyed talking to a man of sense ;
and it is said, he was impatient when any
one else spoke of mountains. A literary

Traits of
Words-
worth's
vanity.

friend told me he was once at a small evening party where Milton's watch was passed reverently about, something to be handled carefully and regarded as extremely precious. Wordsworth was also present, and after Milton's watch had received due attention, he solemnly took out his own, and passed it gravely to his neighbor, to be viewed with the same respect !

Charles Lamb's sarcastic concession.

"Wordsworth," said Charles Lamb, "one day told me that he considered Shakespeare greatly overrated. 'There is,' said he, 'an immensity of trick in all Shakespeare wrote, and people are taken by it. Now, if I had a mind, I could write exactly like Shakespeare.' So you see," proceeded Charles Lamb quietly, "it was *only the mind* that was wanting !"

Landor's belief in his future fame.

Walter Savage Landor, "Half a goose and half a gander," as some one has wickedly rhymed his name, was weak in this direction. Whenever he was writing a book his impatience to be in print was such that he seldom carefully finished anything, but was always sending additional sheets and corrections to the printers. He pro-

fessed to scorn popularity, believing that the best works were never received at once by the people, and that his own fame would increase with succeeding generations. Yet he wrote to Southey after the publication of "Gebir:" "I confess that if even foolish men had read 'Gebir,' I should have continued to write poetry. There is something of summer in the hum of insects." And again, when writing his "Imaginary Conversations," he found it difficult to induce a publisher to accept the book, and wrote to Wordsworth: "It will vex me if I am at last obliged to employ a printer who publishes only pamphlets for the mob, conscious as I am that in two thousand years there have not been five volumes in prose equal in their contents to this."

His "Imaginary Conversations."

The extravagant opinion of his own pre-eminence, says Forster, was formed early in life and remained with him in old age. Often as he changed his estimates of contemporaries, according as they rose or fell in his personal regard, this estimate was never changed. He looked upon himself as superior to everybody else, and was angry

Forster on Landor.

with titles because they disputed his higher title.

Kate Field in her articles written some time ago on the last days of Landor, has shown the most agreeable side of his nature, and she thus defends him from the charge of egotism.

Defence of
Landor.

“ Shall Landor be branded with intense egotism for claiming immortality ? Can it be denied that he will be read with admiration as long as printing and the English language endure ? Can there be greatness without conscious power ? Egotism is the belief of narrow minds in the supreme significance of a mortal self. Conscious power is the belief in certain immortal attributes, emanating from and productive of, Youth and Beauty.”





CHAPTER III.

How delightful it must be to feel so important, so above the common herd ! Schopenhauer, the pessimistic philosopher, was another extraordinary example of self-complacency. As he grew older, Schopenhauer learned to express his good opinion of himself and his works with the serenest equanimity. No more naïve expressions of self-complacency have perhaps ever been penned, than this gentleman's eulogiums on his own productions; as, for example, when he writes to the publisher of his work that "its worth and importance are so great, that I do not venture to express it even toward you, because you could not believe me," and proceeds to quote a review "which speaks of me with the highest praise, and I am plainly the greatest philosopher of the age, which is really saying much less than the good

Schopenhauer's colossal self-complacency.

Schopenhauer's
heartily appetite.

man thinks." "Sir," he said to an unoffending stranger who watched him across a table-d'hôte (where he habitually acted the part of the local "lion"); "Sir, you are astonished at my appetite. True, I eat three times as much as you, but then I have three times as much mind." The reader who thinks that this speech could never have been spoken except in jest, and to produce a good-humored laugh, has not yet studied Schopenhauer's saturnine temperament, to which a joke at his own expense must have been quite inconceivable. His intense contempt for women wavered when he saw that they could feel an interest in his works.

His contempt of human-kind and of his contemporaries.

To contempt of human-kind Schopenhauer added an immense conceit of his own philosophic importance. "He did not hesitate," says F. H. Hedge, "to declare himself the foremost philosopher of all time. I have lifted farther than any mortal before me the veil of truth; but I would like to see the man who can boast of having had a more wretched set of contemporaries than I"—meaning Schelling and Hegel, and the philosophic and learned world of his day. He

actually believed that the University philosophers were afraid of him—were afraid that if he came to be known they would fall at once into hopeless neglect, and therefore had combined to suppress him ! And how he chuckles at their defeat when, in his latter years, he began to emerge a little from his long obscurity. “Their Caspar Hauser,” he says, “has escaped, in spite of their machinations. I am read, and shall continue to be read ; *legor et legar.*”

When in 1818 Schopenhauer offered his principal work to the publisher Brockhaus, in Leipzig, he described it in the following words :

Description
of his chief
work.

“My work is a new philosophical system—new in every sense of the word ; not merely a new presentation of old truths, but a closely-connected series of ideas which have hitherto never yet entered into any one’s head. I am firmly convinced that the book in which I have accomplished the difficult task of presenting these ideas in a clear light to others, is one of those which subsequently become the source and occasion of a hundred others.”

Hegel regretted when dying that he should leave but one person in the world who understood his philosophy, and he was not certain that he grasped it entirely.

Karoline
Bauer's
sketch of
Schlegel.

In the Memoirs of Karoline Bauer, the accomplished German comedienne, I find an interesting picture of Schlegel, the profound Shakesperian critic, as he appeared to this bright woman.

His foppish
dress.

“My talented colleague and countrywoman, the youthful tragedienne of the Vienna Burg Theatre, Sophie Müller, had come to Berlin for a temporary engagement in 1827. When I returned her visit, I found seated beside her on the sofa an old, active little gentleman, dressed up like a May-pole, very affected, wearing a wig of fair curls, having his lips and spare cheeks painted with rouge, clad most foppishly according to the latest fashion, decked with the most variegated orders, turning a gold snuff-box, upon which might be seen the turbaned portrait of Madame de Staël, between his well-kept fingers sparkling with jewels, and casting complacent looks into the mirror which was attached, under the lid, to the inside of the snuff-box.

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“Sophie Müller sat pale and fatigued, as if in a trance, beside this strange admirer. As if electrified, she rushed forward to meet me, whispering during the embrace, ‘Thanks that you have come. But now you must make the sacrifice of relieving me for a little from the insipid flatteries of this illustrious dotard. My strength is exhausted, and I begin to feel the approach of the terrible moment when I must yawn in his very face, from nervous collapse.’ Then Sophie formally introduced to me Herr Professor August von Schlegel, and gently pushed me, quite nonplussed, on to the sofa beside the sweetly smiling one, who immediately poured upon me a perfect shower of compliments, not, of course, without some reflex application to his own dear self. His insipid flatteries.

“Whilst I was busy examining curiously the coquettish little gentleman, I could not help repeating to myself, ‘How is it possible that this old coxcomb—Schlegel was sixty years old—that this parody of a man, could enchain for such a long time Madame de Staël, and translate Shakespeare so splendidly.’

"Then I remembered a story I had often heard, but never indited, that once a poet had embraced a little girl, saying, 'Dear child, never forget this momentous hour, in which August Wilhelm von Schlegel kisses you,' but I believe it now."

Self-appreciation in musicians and artists. Beethoven and Napoleon.

Musicians and artists are intense in their self-appreciation. Beethoven, when standing with Goethe in the presence of Napoleon, refused to make his obeisance, saying to Goethe, who had bowed with profound respect, "When two such men are together, it is fitting that kings and emperors should bow to us!"

Northcote "cutting" the Prince Regent.

Northcote being once asked by Sir William Knighton what he thought of the Prince Regent, he replied, "I am not acquainted with him." "Why, his royal Highness says that he knows you." "Knows me! Pooh! That's all brag."

Wagner a grand personage.

Wagner used to take off his hat to his own image in the glass. Even at home in his Villa Wahnfried, he could never quite unbend. He expected every visitor to pay him a tribute; he would indeed weigh the words counted out to him, and let you know

in a tone of gentle reproof if he thought that the praise fell short of what was his due.

To call upon Richard Wagner for the first time without having been informed of his peculiarities, was to experience a mild shock. Entering the room where his visitor was seated, he would throw the door wide open before him, as if it were fit that his approach should be heralded like that of a king, and he would stand for a moment on the threshold, a curious mediæval figure in a frame. The mystified visitor, rising from his seat, would behold a man richly clad in costume of velvet and satin, like those of the early Tudor period, and wearing a bonnet such as are seen in portraits of Henry VI. and his three successors. He was a magnificent host, for he loved to dazzle, and saw no reason why his table should not be as sumptuously served as a king's. When he travelled, the courier who preceded him engaged, if possible, those suites of apartments in first-class hotels which are generally reserved for crowned heads.

Clergymen are by no means exempt from this foible. John Wesley published a dic-
His audi-
ences.
Wesley as a
lexicog-
rapher.

tionary of only one hundred pages, but with a large and rambling preface, in which he assumes his to be the best dictionary in the world. "Many are the mistakes in all others, whereas I can truly say I know of none in this."

Mark Pattison's cheerful opinion of himself.

The memoirs of Mark Pattison, the rector of Lincoln, and an Oxford Don, show that the worthy gentleman had a cheering opinion of himself. He confesses to have been very stupid as a youth ; but that soon after twenty he began to emerge, to develop, to conquer, as it were, in the realms of ideas. "It was all growth, development, and I have never ceased to grow, to develop, to discover up to the very last, while my contemporaries, who started so far ahead of me, fixed their mental horizon before they were thirty-five ; mine has been ever enlarging and expanding. There seems to have fulfilled itself for me that adage of Goethe : 'Of that which a man desires in youth, of that he shall have in age as much as he will.' "

"If they want to fill their pews, why, they must secure a talented man—like me," was

the recent remark of a popular New York pastor.

Everywhere we find the same weakness. How terribly severe was the shy and really modest Hawthorne on poor, prosy, harmless Tupper! He said: "In Tupper's dining-room are six fine lithographic portraits of the Queen's children, as large as life, and all taken at the same age, so that they would appear to have been littered at one birth, like kittens. They were presented by her Majesty, who is a great admirer of the 'Proverbial Philosophy,' and gives it to each of her children as they arrive at a proper age to comprehend the depths of its wisdom. Tupper is the man of all the world to be made supremely happy by such appreciation as this, for he is the vainest of all little men, and his vanity continually effervesces out of him as naturally as ginger-beer froths. Yet it is the least incommodious vanity I ever witnessed; he does not insist upon your expressing admiration, he does not seem to wish it; nor hardly to care whether you admire him or not. He is so entirely satisfied with himself that he takes

Hawthorne's criticism on Tupper.

The Queen's liking for "Proverbial Philosophy."

the admiration of all the world for granted—the recognition of his supreme merit being inevitable. I liked him, and laughed in my sleeve at him, and was utterly weary of him, for certainly he is the ass of asses.”

Private
sentiments
and diaries
not sacred.

These private sentiments scribbled in a private diary should not have been given to the public. But nothing is now regarded as sacred, if it can add interest to a memoir. I feel half ashamed to copy it, even with this demurrer. But it is just what I want—an off-hand sketch by a great artist of a big little man.

One critic finds a trivial and utterly unimportant letter from Channing preserved by Julian Hawthorne, and wonders why, until near the close are found flattering compliments paid to the manly character and high promise of—the boy—Julian !

The Laure-
ates opinion
of his “Bu-
gle Song.”

I dare hardly touch upon the Queen's own literary efforts in this connection. The mere recollection of their prolix details of domesticity wearies. But I can say of her Laureate, that he pronounces his Bugle Song “to be the grandest lyric utterance the world has ever produced.”

Miss Martineau's opinion on this subject must not be omitted. "I had heard all my life of the vanity of women as a subject of pity to men ; but when I went to London, I saw vanity in high places, which was never transcended by that of women in their lower rank. There was Brougham, wincing under a newspaper criticism, and playing the fool among silly women. There was Jeffrey, flirting with clever women in long succession. There was Bulwer on a sofa, sparkling and languishing among a set of female votaries—he and they dized out, perfumed, and presenting the nearest picture to a seraglio to be seen on British ground. There was poor Campbell obtruding his sentimentalities amidst a quivering apprehension of making himself ridiculous. There was Edwin Landseer, a friendly and agreeable companion, but holding his cheerfulness at the mercy of great folks' graciousness to him. To see him enter a room curled, and cravatted, and glancing round in anxiety about his reception, could not but make a woman wonder where among her own sex she could find a more palpable

Miss Martineau on the vanity of men of letters in London.

Brougham.

Bulwer.

Campbell.

Landseer.

Whewell.

vanity. Then there was Whewell, grasping at praise for universal learning ('omni-science being his forte, and science his foible,' as Sydney Smith said), and seeking female adoration. I might instance more, but this is enough. The display was always to me most melancholy, for the detriment was so much greater than in the case of female vanity." Then she goes on to fiercely hit and pummel a dozen women—herself the vainest of all.

Egotism and
vanity
related.

Egotism is first cousin to vanity ; they are almost always found associated, and we all have too much of it. In the introduction to the "Bigelow papers," the author begins by talking about himself, adding, "Thets just *natur*, and most ginerally alluz pleasin, I bleeve I've noticed to one of the company, an thets more than wut you can say of most speeches of talkin." (By the way, what a good definition is that of a *Bore*, "a person who insists on talking about himself—when you want to talk—about yourself!!" or talks about his rheumatism when you want to talk about *your* rheumatism !

Definition
of a bore.

Writers
addicted to
egotism.

The word Egotism is said to have been

coined by the Port-Royalists to describe their enemy, Montaigne, who was professedly an egotist, saying, "I hunger to make myself known." Rousseau also gloried in disgusting details of his own life, and Byron delighted to write of himself as a gloomy monster of iniquity. Of no other poet can it be said so truly that he wrote only about himself. Childe Harold, Don Juan, Lara, the Giaour, Cain, what are they all but Byron the sad, bad boy, in different costumes? But egotism in writing has a morbid charm, while in conduct and conversation it is always repulsive.

Macaulay, in his Review of Moore's Life of Byron, says: "There can be no doubt that this remarkable man owed the vast influence which he exercised over his contemporaries at least as much to his gloomy egotism as to the real power of his poetry. We never could very clearly understand how it is that egotism, so unpopular in conversation, should be so popular in writing; or how it is that men who affect in their compositions qualities and feelings which they have not, impose so much more easily on

Rousseau.

Byron.

Macaulay
on Byron.

Egotism in
conversation
and in writing.

their contemporaries than on posterity. The interest which the loves of Petrarch excited in his own time, and the pitying fondness with which half Europe looked upon Rousseau, are well known. To readers of our time, the love of Petrarch seems to have been of that kind which breaks no hearts ; and the sufferings of Rousseau to have deserved laughter rather than pity—to have been partly counterfeited and partly the consequences of his own perverseness and vanity. . . . Whether there ever existed, or can ever exist, a person answering to the description which Byron gave of himself, may be doubted ; but that he was not such a person is beyond all doubt. It is ridiculous to imagine that a man whose mind was really imbued with scorn of his fellow-creatures would have published three or four books every year in order to tell them so ; or that a man who could say with truth that he neither sought sympathy nor needed it, would have admitted all Europe to hear his farewell to his wife, and his blessings on his child. In the second canto of *Childe Harold*, he tells us that he is insensible to fame and obloquy :

Byron's
description
of himself.

“ ‘ Ill may such contest now the spirit move,
Which heeds nor keen reproof nor partial praise.’ ”

Yet we know on the best evidence that, a day or two before he published these lines, he was greatly, indeed childishly, elated by the compliments paid to his maiden speech in the House of Lords.”

Napoleon, who banished Madame de Staël because she wounded his vanity, was pos-<sup>Napoleon's
exorbitant
egotism.</sup> sessed by an absorbing, exorbitant egotism which caused his downfall. The universal cry of France in 1814 was, “ *Enough* of Bonaparte ! ”

“ Egotism,” says Emerson, “ is a kind of <sup>Emerson on
egotism.</sup> buckram that gives momentary strength and concentration to men, and seems to be much used in nature for fabrics in which local and spasmodic energy are required. But it spoils conversation.”

Erskine was a decided egotist, so much <sup>Erskine,
sketch of, by
Cobbett.</sup> so that Cobbett said of one of his speeches, he should publish it as soon as he could get a new font of type with a sufficient number of capital *I*'s, and it was proposed that he should take the title of Baron *Ego* of Eye in the county of Suffolk. Lord Clackman-

non was another title offered him after an animated speech which lasted (so they affirmed) thirteen hours, eighteen minutes and a second.

Byron on
Erskine.

We find the following entry in the journal of his friend and genuine admirer, Lord Byron : "A goodly number of lords, ladies, and wits. There was *Erskine*, *good*—but *intolerable* ; he jested, he talked, he did everything admirably, but then he would be applauded for the same thing twice over. He would read his own verses, his own paragraphs, and tell his own stories again and again—and then the trial by jury. I almost wished it abolished, for I sat next him at dinner. As I had read his published speeches, there was no occasion to repeat them to me."

Mme.
D'Arblay.

Madame D'Arblay satirically writes : "This renowned orator at a convivial meeting at his own house, fastened upon my father with all the volubility of his eloquence, and all the exuberance of his happy good humor, in singing his own exploits and praises, without insisting that his hearers should join in the chorus ; or rather,

perhaps, without discovering, from his own self-absorption, that this ceremony was omitted." The funniest part in this account is found in a note from Thomas Erskine, who, referring to Miss Burney's strictures, shrewdly observes that "the merits of Evelina were probably but little known to my father, who seldom read books of that sort."

And Miss Burney mentions the fact that Mr. Erskine confined his attention exclusively to another lady, thus recording unconsciously an instance of the all-pervading infirmity of egotism. In her extreme old age, even on her *death-bed*, she had copies made of her letters received in the height of her fame ; preparing for publication the smooth compliments and monstrous flatteries written by hands that had long been dust.

Lord Campbell sharply remarks : "Erskine's egotism is likewise censured by Hannah More, who I suppose had been silenced when she wished to enlarge upon her *own* writings and her own good deeds."

Hannah More said : "Among the chief

talkers at the Bishop's was Lord Erskine. To me he is rather brilliant than pleasant. His animation is vehement, and he contrives to make the conversation fall too much on himself—a sure way not to be agreeable in mixed company.”

Erskine's
social power
commended.

One celebrated blue-stockings, however, seems to have been charmed by him; she bestows enthusiastic commendation on his social power. “The enchanting Mr. Erskine,” writes the affected, lackadaisical Miss Seward, “honored me with frequent attentions in the ball-room at Buxton and with frequent visits at my lodgings, where he often met Mr. Wilberforce. Did Mr. Erskine tell you of our accidental *rencontre* on the Chatsworth road? I said to my mind, What an elegant figure is that now approaching us, who, loitering with a book, now reads, now holds the volume in a drop hand to contemplate the fine views on the right! There seems mind in every gesture, in every step; and how like Mr. Erskine! A few seconds converted resemblance into reality. After mutual exclamations, the graceful *Being* stopped the chaise, opened

the door, and putting one foot on the step, poured all his eloquence upon a retrospect of the hours we had passed together at Buxton, illuminating, as he, flattering, said, one of those seldom intervals of his busy life in which his mind was left to enjoy undisturbed the luxury of intellectual intercourse."

Imagine, if you can, Erskine's feelings when Napoleon at his presentation did not recognize him at all, only asking the killing question "*Êtes-vous légiste?*" This was all the harder as the First Consul made a long, florid address to Fox just before. As he knew little of the French language, he could not spread his own fame.

The egotism of Dickens is particularly prominent in his letters; so much about "me, and my books and my readings," is rather tiresome.

"They have one theme from first to last, and it is the same theme which, with very few exceptions, fills all the other letters, *i. e.*, Charles Dickens, what he is doing, and what the world thinks of it, says of it, does about it. In this regard, these letters are truly

Erskine's
presentation
to Napoleon.

Dickens's
letters
relating to
himself.

What they
might have
been.

pitiful. Letters which might have been from their standpoints of date and place, and from Dickens's familiarity with men of note and things of interest, simply invaluable and delightful, are saddening to read, and are almost without interest except as a means of understanding Dickens's character. Contrast them with almost any letters known, written by public men of many ages, and they stand out bald and poor in their selfish iterations of the struggles and triumphs of one man. He has the usual off-hand jollity and semblance of good-fellowship which so often accompany inordinate selfishness, and go far to cover up its unsuspected shame. People can live very close to this sort of good-natured, affectionate-phrased, vivacious, hilarious, rollicking, insatiate vanity, and never find it out. Its very surface is its shield, its shallowness is its safety, its arrogance its success."

Some
redeeming
features.

Dickens in
Washington.

Once he dined at Washington with Secretary Stanton. It must have been a pleasant occasion for him, for he at once wrote home: "Mr. Stanton is a man of very remarkable memory, and famous for his ac-

quaintance with the minutest details of my books. Give him a passage anywhere, and he will instantly cap it, and go on with the context. He was commander-in-chief here of all the Northern forces, and never went to sleep without reading something from my books, which are always with him." Some one says of Dickens, that the breezes of applause and admiration were the very breath of life in his nostrils.

He said, "I should not write at all, if I were not the vainest man in the world"—a truth he did not believe. Another critic says of him: "There was vanity in everything which he said, did, or wrote all his his life long, and it kept growing to the very end. It was the most enormous, omnipresent, all-pervading, many-sided, irrepressible, unsuspecting vanity which has ever been exhibited to the gaze of astonished humanity; a vanity worthy of the Olympian Jove himself!"

In not a few of Carlyle's letters the burden is "I"—"I"—"I."

The recently published autobiography of Henry Taylor is permeated with a mild

A saying of Dickens.

Carlyle's letters.

Henry Taylor's autobiography.

flavor of satisfaction. Three lines tell the whole of it.

“My name had travelled far,
And in the world’s applausive countenance kind
I sunned myself.”

Mirabeau’s
inflation
punctured
by Talley-
rand.

Egotism should be occasionally subdued by quiet satire, as when Talleyrand ruthlessly punctured a balloon in which Mirabeau was making publicly a vainglorious ascent. At some important political crisis, the great orator was descanting in society on the qualities which a minister required to extricate the nation from its difficulties, namely: great knowledge, genius, familiarity with the lower classes, the gift of writing and speaking eloquently—all of which it was obvious enough he reckoned as his own. Everybody stared with admiration but Talleyrand, who simply listened attentively to the end, and then observed: “It seems to me you have omitted one of the qualities of this remarkable man—should he not be very much pitted with the small-pox (*peigné de la petite vérole*)?” This could be none other than Mirabeau, and

the effect upon the auditors can only be imagined.

Egotism is of many kinds, from Carlyle's, Varieties of egotism. overbearing, dictatorial, and unreasonable, to that which we find so delightful in Charles Lamb or Ik Marvel.

In our own country there seems as yet to be few great men or women who assert their superiority in offensive ways. Sumner's letters, indeed, were tedious from excessive egotism, and Margaret Fuller did make, when quite young, this astounding statement: "I have now met all the minds of this country worth meeting, and find none comparable to my own." Self-assertion in America still in the bud.

Thoreau, the Bachelor of Nature, almost equalled her saying: "The stars and I belong to a mutual admiration society. I would put forth sublime thoughts daily." Thoreau's conceit and arrogant dicta.

"The world will sooner or later tire of philanthropy and all religion based on it mainly. They cannot long sustain my spirit. In order to avoid delusions, I would fain let man go by and behold a universe in which man is but a grain of sand."

“What a foul subject is this of doing good instead of minding one’s own life.”

“The whole enterprise of this nation is totally devoid of interest to me.”

“Would I not rather be a cedar-post than the farmer that sets it, or he that preaches to that farmer.”

“I would do easily without the post-office ; never read any memorable news in a newspaper.”

“Nothing at the North Pole that I could not find at Concord.”

And after that triple tragedy at Fire Island, where Margaret Fuller with husband and baby boy lost their lives, within sight of shore and safety and loving friends, Thoreau, on picking up a button from the coat of the drowned Marquis, reached the acme of self-aggrandizement ; he mused : “Held up, it intercepts the light ; an actual button, and yet all the life it is connected with, is less substantial to me and interests me less than *my* faintest dream.”

Lowell on
Thoreau.

Lowell, who does not believe in Thoreau’s originality, nor his arrogant omniscience about nature, says : “He turns common-

places end for end, and fancies it makes something new of them. He discovered nothing, but thought everything a discovery of his own, from moonlight to the planting of acorns and nuts by squirrels."

Thoreau may have inherited his conceit ^{Thoreau's style.} from his mother, who, when she heard that Thoreau's style was like Emerson's, remarked placidly, "Yes, Mr. Emerson does write like my son!" which is too much like the story that Whittier once lent a volume of Plato to a neighboring farmer, and when the book was returned said, "Well, friend, how did you like Plato?" "First rate," said the farmer; "I see he's got some of my ideas."

Emerson, writing of Margaret Fuller, ad- ^{Lowell on Margaret Fuller.} mired her greatly, but complained that the "mountainous Me" was always apparent. Lowell describes her as a woman

"The whole of whose being's a capital 'I.'"

"She will take an old notion, and make it her own,
By saying it o'er in her Sibylline tone ;
Or persuade you 'tis something tremendously deep,
By repeating it so as to put you to sleep ;

And she well may defy any mortal to see through it,
When once she has mixed up her infinite *me* through
it."

Walt Whit-
man, facile
princeps in
conceit.

Walt Whitman is our chief egotist, and
his conceit surpasses belief.

"Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy what-
ever I touch or am touch'd from ;
The scent of these armpits, aroma finer than prayer ;
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the
creeds.
If I worship one thing more than another, it shall be
the spread of my own body or any part of it."

Pays no
heed to the
majority.

Goethe said that the assent of even one
man confirmed him infinitely in his opin-
ions. Whitman is only the more peremp-
tory in his self-importance, when he finds
that the majority differ from him.

"I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws to
unsettle them ;
I am more resolute because all have denied me, than I
could ever have been had all accepted me.
I heed not, and have never heeded either experience,
cautions, majorities, nor ridicule ;
And the threat of what is called hell is little or noth-
ing to me,
And the lure of what is called heaven is little or
nothing to me."

Much of his poetry is egotistic.

His extraordinary "Song of Myself," begins thus :

His poetry
egotistic.

"I celebrate myself and sing myself,"

and he continually delights in self-portraiture.

"No dainty dolce affettuoso I ;

Bearded, sunburnt, gray-necked, forbidding, I have arrived.

To be wrestled with as I pass, for the solid prizes of the universe ;

For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them."

As an English critic looks at it, "These last two lines either mean nothing at all, or announce that Whitman is a God."

He tells us frankly what he thinks of himself. Bits of self-portraiture.

"Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights,
well entretied, braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
I and this mystery, here we stand."

"I do not snivel that snivel the world over."

"I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones."

Whitman
tells us
frankly what
he thinks of
himself.

"I dote on myself."

"I am an acme of things accomplished."

"My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stars."

"Let me have my own way:
After me—Vista!"

"To be conscious of my body so satisfied, so large!
To be this incredible God I am."

"Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me."

"Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like
cheerful boatmen,
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,
They sent influences to look after what was to hold
me."

"Before I was born out of my mother generations
guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could
overlay it."

"For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on.
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths
and deposited it with care."

"All forces have been steadily employed to complete
and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

There seems to be no middle ground in judging this uncommon man. He is either idealized, revered, sustained in all his notions of "Art" in American Literature, or condemned, and his poetry regarded as wholly obscene and unintelligible. He is either an eagle, strong, untamed, bold in flight, or a harpy that befouls his own table. Such a fearless innovator naturally finds enemies and advocates.

Reverenced
or con-
demned by
critics.

Dr. Dowden says that "Whitman falls even below the modesty of brutes," and Peter Bayne gives the following as the most reasonable of all his prophecies:—"I bequeath myself to the dirt. If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles."

Rossetti, one of Whitman's extravagant eulogists, says: "Each of Whitman's poems is a menstruum saturated with form in solution." To this Bayne adds: "When the solution crystallizes, it will be time to inquire whether the crystals are poetry. A marble statue in a state of solution is mud."

Rossetti and
Bayne on
Whitman.

There was a brief period in the life of the gifted and erratic Poe, when in "the mad

Poe's early
pride sub-
siding.

pride of his intellectuality," he had said that his whole nature revolted from the idea that there existed any being superior to himself, but that was soon over.

I am happy to say that I cannot recall any other of our authors who are notably self-conscious.

Self-conceit
and self-con-
sciousness.

Self-conceit is always self-consciousness, but self-consciousness is not always self-conceit, but often the opposite. Witness the modest, delicate way in which our beloved Longfellow, in his poem on the fiftieth anniversary of his college class, refers to the future.

"Ye halls, in whose seclusion and repose
Phantoms of fame, like exhalations, rose
And vanished,—we who are about to die
Salute you !
Ye do not answer us ! Ye do not hear !
We are forgotten ; and in your austere
And calm indifference, ye little care
Whether we come, or go, or whence, or where.
Ye heed not ; we are only as the blast
A moment heard, and then forever past."

And our military commanders from Washington to Grant have shown that they were confident of their ability with no undue

complacency. "I propose to fight it on this line," is the calm persistency of Genius.

The influence of flattery on great men is noticeable. William Godwin could swallow the largest dose with ease. A fascinating widow understood this, and so won his heart. She occupied the next house to Godwin. The widower often sat in the little balcony at his window, and one evening Mrs. Clairmont, a perfect stranger, addressed him rapturously from her own with "Is it possible that I behold the immortal Godwin?" and they were married soon after.

William
Godwin con-
quered by
flattery.

Madame de Staël and some other famous author once met by special invitation at a French country-house, and each brought a handsomely bound book of their own to present to the other. Both were profuse in their flattery, both declared the other's work would have a priceless value, to be preserved by them with infinite care. When they had made their gushing adieus and departed, the amused hostess found the respective volumes carelessly left on table and sofa !

Chateaubriand a worshipper of himself.

Chateaubriand was perpetually analyzing himself and his emotions, absorbed by his self-study, self-wonder, and self-worship. Guizot says of him, it was his illusion to think himself the equal of the most consummate statesmen, and his soul was filled with bitterness, because men would not admit him to be the rival of Napoleon as well as Milton. Sainte-Beuve speaks of Madame Récamier's efforts to satisfy his self-complacency :

Flattered by Madame Récamier.

“Madame de Maintenon was never more ingenious in amusing Louis XIV. than Madame Récamier in interesting Chateaubriand. I have always remarked, said Boileau on returning from Versailles, that when the conversation does not turn on himself, the king directly gets tired, and is either ready to yawn or to go away. Every great poet when he is growing old, is a little like Louis XIV. in this respect. Madame Récamier had each day a thousand pleasant contrivances to excite and to flatter him. She assembled from all quarters friends for him, new admirers. She chained us all to the feet of her idol with links of gold.”

Out of France it would be difficult to find ^{His} a more egotistical piece of self-portraiture ^{memoirs.} than "Les Mémoires d'Outre Tombe," which Madame Récamier had read aloud to a select and admiring audience. Chateaubriand is not quite so ostentatious in his egotism as the Prince de Ligne, who headed the chapters in his "Mémoires et Mélanges," "De moi pendant le jour." "De moi pendant la nuit." "De moi encore." "Mémoire pour mon cœur." Still he parades himself on every possible occasion, and not always to his advantage.

Chateaubriand seemed to appreciate that vanity was a universal feeling, for he once wrote in this strain—"Every one of us in ^{Chateaubriand on} his conscience, and most sincerely, believes ^{vanity as a} himself to be the man of his age ; the man ^{universal} who has opened a new career ; the man ^{feeling.} who has eclipsed the past ; the man in whose presence all reputations dwindle to nothing ; the man who will survive and alone survive ; the man of posterity ; the man of the renovation of things ; the man of the future." He adds, "What is more delicious than admiration ?"

Nathaniel
Lee on
praise.

Nathaniel Lee, called the "mad" poet, was entirely sane when he wrote, "Praise is the greatest encouragement we chameleons can pretend to, or rather the manna that keeps soul and body together. We devour it as if it were angels' food, and on vanity think we grow immortal. There is nothing transports a poet, next to love, like commending in the right place."

Vanity—is it
a source of
strength or
weakness?

At the close of these citations, can any one answer the plain question, what is vanity, and decide whether it is a good or a bad thing? Is it strength or weakness? Our condemnation is apt to collapse when we study the subject carefully, and we have to waver in our decision.

Varying in
its effects.

Infuse vanity into such a man as Goldsmith, and it adds a child-like charm to his character; it gives a tinge of delightful humor to his writing, and enables his friends to love him the more heartily, because they have a right also to pay themselves by a little kindly contempt.

Byron.

Make a Byron vain, and half his magnificent force of mind will be wasted by silly efforts to attract the notice of his contempo-

raries by attacking their best feelings, and affecting (a superfluous task !) vices which he does not possess. The vanity of a Wordsworth enables him to treat with profound disdain the sneers of Edinburgh reviewers, and the dull indifference of the mass of readers ; but it encourages him also to become a literary sloven, to spoil noble thought by grovelling language, and to subside into supine obstructiveness. Conversely, the vanity of a Pope makes him suffer unspeakable tortures from the stings of critics, compared to whom Jeffrey was a giant, condescend to the meanest artifices to catch the applause of his contemporaries, and hunger and thirst for the food which Wordsworth rejected with contempt. But it also enables him to become, within his own limits, the most exquisite of artists in words ; to increase in skill as he increased in years ; and to coin phrases for a distant posterity even out of the most trifling ebullition of passing spite.

The vanity of a Milton excites something approaching to awe. The vanity of a Congreve excites our rightful contempt. Van-

ity seems to be at once the source of the greatest weaknesses and of the greatest achievements.

Humanity
without vanity.

If vanity could be totally eliminated from the human race ; if we did but realize our infinitesimal unimportance ; that the old world will wag on just as well without us ; that nobody is so great but that some one can be found to fill his place ; who would try to rise, to excel ?

Vanity may be a weakness, but it is undoubtedly a consolation and a blessing.

Voltaire, in his poem on "L'Anniversaire de la St. Barthélemy," says :

"Dieu prit pitié du genre humain :
Il le créa frivole et vain,
Pour le rendre moins misérable."

Goethe's reflections on and defence of vanity.

Goethe's words are worth quoting :—"It is the pleasure one has in himself, the desire to communicate this consciousness of his to others, that makes a man agreeable ; the feeling of his own grace that makes him graceful. Would to Heaven all men were vain ! that is, vain with clear perception, with moderation and in a proper sense ; we

should then, in the cultivated world, have ^{Vanity} happy times of it. Women, it is told us, ^{pleasing in} are vain from the very cradle, yet does it ^{women.} not become them, do they not please us the more?

“How can a youth form himself, if he is not vain? An empty, hollow nature, will, by this means, at least contrive to give itself an outward show, and a proper man will soon train himself from the outside inwards.”



INSANITY

A

SHADOW OF GENIUS.

“ The whole of Life is the greatest insanity.”

—HUMBOLDT.



INSANITY A SHADOW OF GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

SENECA long ago laid down the maxim : Seneca and Aristotle on genius and insanity.
“No great genius without a mixture of insanity ;” Aristotle declares “it is the essence of a great poet to be mad,” and if you look for proofs of this statement, you will be surprised and saddened. Horace devoted one of his Satires to this subject, introducing Damasippus, a bankrupt merchant turned philosopher, and discussing Damasippus. with him, in support of the sentiments of the Stoics, that saying of theirs, that all men, even Stoics, the Sapientes alone excepted, are mad.

But the Stoics pronounced every man Opinion of the Stoics. mad whom perverse folly or ignorance of truth hurries blindly along. This definition

is entirely too comprehensive. It has been an interesting study to trace a taint of eccentricity, moodiness, and temporary insanity in the minds of some of our greatest geniuses. While still believing that many men of genius have been perfectly sane, isolated assertions, aphorisms, and essays favoring the opposite theory exist from Plato to the present day.

James Sully, in his recent article on Genius and Insanity, in the *Popular Science Monthly*, says :

French writers on this theme.

“As might be expected, French writers, with their relish for pungent paradox, have dealt with special fulness on this theme.

Montaigne.

“Infinis esprits,” writes Montaigne, on a visit to Tasso in his asylum, “se trouvent ruinez par leur propre force et soupplasse.”

Pascal.

Pascal observes that “l’extrême esprit est voisin de l’extrême folie.” In a similar

Diderot.

strain Diderot writes : “Oh ! que le génie et la folie se touchent de bien près !” The French writer who most distinctly empha-

Lamartine.

sizes the proposition is Lamartine. “Le génie,” he observes in one place, “porte en lui un principe de destruction, de mort, de

folie, comme le fruit porte le ver," and again he speaks of that "maladie mentale" which is called genius. The French alienist Moreau de Tours announces "le génie est une névrose."

In German literature it is Goethe, the perfect ideal, as it would seem, of healthy genius, who dwells most impressively on this idea. His drama, "Tasso," is an elaborate attempt to uncover and expose the morbid growths which are apt to cling parasitically about the tender plant of genius. With this must be mentioned, as another striking literary presentment of the same subject, the two eloquent passages on the nature of genius in Schopenhauer's *opus magnum*.

This conviction seems almost universal. Ouida's remarks. Ouida remarks: "Certainly people of great talent always are a little mad. If they are not flightily mad with eccentricity and brandy, they are morbidly mad with solitude and sentiment." This is an extravagant statement, but certainly the list of men of genius who were actually insane, or were accused of insanity, is startling and impressive in its length.

Moreau de
Tours.

Goethe's
"Tasso."

Schopen-
hauer's elo-
quent pas-
sages on
genius.

Ouida's re-
marks.

A long and
startling list
of men of
genius who
were insane.

Sophocles. Sophocles was charged before the tribunal of insanity, and was only acquitted by the recitation of "Œdipus Colonus."

Lucretius. Lucretius, one of the greatest Latin poets, author of "De Rerum Naturâ," which Macaulay calls "the finest poem in the Latin language—indeed, the finest didactic poem in any language," is said to have been made insane by a love-potion, and died by his own hand in his forty-fourth year. And in several passages he writes with extraordinary vividness of the impression produced both by his dreams and by waking visions, returning with insistence to the subject, and recalling with horror the effects of such abnormal phenomena. These may have been hallucinations, which are said to be consistent with perfect sanity.

Tasso's
hopeless pas-
sion.

Tasso, the celebrated Italian epic poet, was really crazed by a romantic but hopeless passion for Leonora, a sister of the Duke of Este. Difference in rank forbade all thoughts of marriage, nor did she seem to care in the least for his devotion or his sonnets. Her brother at last ordered that he be confined in a convent and treated as

a madman. Escaping, he returned to Ferrara, his infatuation increased, and he was next sent to a hospital for lunatics, where he remained seven years. At last the Pope invited Tasso to Rome to be crowned with laurel, as Petrarch had been. He went, and was a guest in the Pope's palace, but alas! before the day of coronation arrived, he died.

His "Jerusalem Delivered" is the great epic poem of modern times. Voltaire observed that in the choice of his subject Tasso was superior to Homer, and compares him favorably with Virgil and Ariosto. His great poem, and his life-story.

Yet his life-story is a pathetic jargon of love and despair, hallucinations and possessions—a veritable madman.

And Luiz de Camoens, the best-known of Portuguese poets, lost his wits through an unhappy love-affair, and died raving in a hospital at Lisbon. Luiz de Camoens.

These words bring to mind Mrs. Browning's exquisite poem, "Catarina to Camoens," she dying in his absence abroad and referring to the poem in which he recorded the sweetness of her eyes.

“On the door you will not enter,
 I have gazed too long : adieu !
 Hope withdraws her peradventure ;
 Death is near me, and not *you*.
 Come, O lover,
 Close and cover
 These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
 ‘ Sweetest eyes, were ever seen ! ’ ”

Poets have often been compared to the nightingale singing with a thorn in her breast, and their intense natures suffer more keenly than others, even to actual loss of reason.

Mistake of
 writers.

But it is wise to take an occasional look at the other side of the argument, lest we fall into the mistake made by Madden and Moreau of thinking a genius insane if he is guilty of the most harmless eccentricity, or had a great-grandmother who was afflicted with epilepsy !

Lamb's Es-
 say on True
 Genius.

Charles Lamb, in his “ Essay on the Sanity of True Genius,” says : “ So far from the position holding true that great wit (or genius, in our modern way of speaking) has a necessary alliance with insanity, the greatest wits, on the contrary, will ever be found to be the sanest writers. It is impossible for the

mind to conceive of a mad Shakespeare. The greatness of wit, by which the poetic talent is here chiefly to be understood, manifests itself in the admirable balance of all the faculties. Madness is the disproportionate straining or excess of any one of them. . . .

“The ground of the mistake is that men finding in the raptures of the higher poetry a condition of exaltation to which they have no parallel in their own experience, besides the spurious resemblance of it in dreams and fevers, impute a state of dreaminess and fever to the poet. But the true poet-dreamer being awake, he is not possessed by his subject, but has dominion over it. In the groves of Eden he walks familiar as in his native paths. He ascends the empyrean heaven, and is not intoxicated. He treads the burning marl without dismay ; he wings his flight without self-loss through realms of chaos, and old night. Or if, abandoning himself to that severer chaos of a human mind untuned, he is content awhile to be mad with Lear, or to hate mankind (a sort of madness) with Timon, neither is that mad-

The true poet according to Lamb.

ness, nor this misanthropy, so unchecked, but that—never letting the reins of reason wholly go, while most he seems to do so—he has his better genius still whispering at his ear, with the good servant Kent suggesting saner counsels, or with the honest steward Flavius recommending kindlier resolutions.”

Lamb may not be considered a convincing authority on this side of the discussion when we recall his own attacks of lunacy and Carlyle’s bitter phrase in regard to him—his “diluted insanity.”

Lenau’s sad
story.

The story of Lenau’s insanity is too sad and horrible to be given in its heart-rending details. At the last he was removed to an insane asylum near Stuttgart. The tidings that Germany’s great lyric poet had lost his reason soon spread in all directions.

For several years this mournful existence continued. At times there were gleams of intelligence, when he seemed to understand the attentions of friends, to enjoy the letters which poured in upon him, but the sadness of his last days was entirely unrelieved. Once at night he was heard weeping bitterly, and when the physician came to him he

moaned, "Poor Lenau is very unhappy." Death was welcome when at last it came to release the troubled spirit.

In Lenau's life, and in his poems, are frequent indications that the demon of insanity was hovering over the poet. He paints with wonderful power in his "Waldkapelle," scenes where insanity is depicted. He once refused to enter an insane asylum as a visitor, saying, "I shall be there soon enough as it is."

In Lenau's case his habits were such as to increase any tendency of this sort.

The German story-teller, Hoffmann, had such a morbid love of horrors as to indicate a diseased mind. "From the devil down to a wry-faced dolt, from the dissonance of life which rends the soul down to a dissonance in music which only rends the ear, the immeasurable kingdom of the ugly, the repulsive, was gathered around him, and his descriptions paint alternately these tormenting objects, and the torments which they prepare for a beautiful soul, with inimitable vividness and truth."

He delighted to occupy his fancy with

His life and poems.

Hoffmann ;
his use of the
magic and
demoniac
element in
fiction.

His study of
the border-
lands of
rationality.

His visions.

the extremes of human action, to dive into the unexplored recesses of human nature, bringing back some startling trait that scarce any imagination save his own would have discovered. He chose for his study the border-lands of rationality : those sad and shadowy states, as insanity, monomania, and hypochondriac somnambulism, where the soul hardly knows itself, and loses reality, and almost self-consciousness. He could laugh at all these mysteries with a cool, ironical laugh, yet they exercised a baneful power over his own mind. He was constantly pursued by the conviction that some secret and dreadful calamity would be sent upon him ; and his mind was frequently haunted by images of awful form and by “doubles ” of himself and others. He even believed he saw visions with his own bodily eyes, and no reasoning nor expostulations could drive away this feeling. Not only when he was writing, but in the midst of a cheerful conversation with friends, at the table, or while enjoying a social glass of wine, he would suddenly exclaim : “See there—there ! that ugly little pygmy ! see

what capers he acts. Pray don't incommode yourself, my little man—you are at liberty to listen to us as much as you please. Will you not come nearer? You are welcome."

These disconnected phrases he used to utter with his eyes riveted upon the spot where he saw the vision; and if his word was doubted, or his vagaries ridiculed, he would knit his brows and with great earnestness, reiterate his assertions, appealing to his wife to confirm him, saying: "I often see them, don't I, Mischa?"

In an introductory sketch of Hoffmann preceding his "Contes Fantastiques," I find this explanation of his peculiar, weird style. Hoffmann's
weird style.

"Hoffmann était continuellement obsédé par une idée qui donne en quelque sorte la clef de ses ouvrages. Il avait la conviction que le mal se cache toujours derrière le bien; ou, comme il s'exprimait, *que le diable met sa queue sur toutes choses*. Son âme était continuellement en proie à des pressentiments funestes; toutes les figures effrayantes qui paraissent dans ses ouvrages, il les voyait près de lui quand il écrivait: aussi

lieve that his inner consciousness, in spite of the apparent madness which springs from it to the surface, is as right as a trivet.' ”

Gérard de Nerval, a French *littérateur* of some reputation, fell in love with Jenny Colon, a pretty actress, “and became subject to a modified form of insanity which did not much impair his genius,” and at last died by suicide. Gérard de Nerval.

Auguste Comte, the French philosopher, who founded the system of positive philosophy, and introduced a new religion, the worship of humanity, himself the high-priest of that religion, with a beautiful woman as his object of adoration, was insane for a time. Auguste Comte.

In the *North American Review* for 1875, there is an interesting description of this trying period.

“In 1825, Comte married a woman who neither understood his views nor shared his aspirations. His domestic quarrels were of daily occurrence, but he worked hard all the time at the completion of his philosophic system, which he was going to ex- Sketch of his domestic life.

pound in a long series of public lectures. After the third of these lectures, however, he was suddenly seized with a fit of insanity, and had to be sent to an asylum. As he did not improve there, Madame Comte insisted on his being sent home again ; but before he was re-admitted to her presence the marriage ceremony, which the couple had so long dispensed with, was, at her request, gone through in due form at the asylum. It must have been a ghastly scene, the blessings of the priest being frequently interrupted by the maniac's blasphemies. But public opinion was satisfied, and Madame Comte showed great tenderness, perseverance, and courage in the discharge of her new duties. In a fit of depression Comte threw himself into the Seine, and the shock of the immersion proved so beneficial that he recovered speedily, and, let it be added, thoroughly, after eighteen months' suffering.

His strange
cure.

His recovery.

“It would be unfair to taunt Comte with his insanity. When he reviewed Broussais's ‘Essay on Insanity,’ in 1828, one year after his recovery, his mind must have been

as clear and as healthy as any man's. To account for the extraordinary extravagance of some of Comte's doctrines, it is not necessary to consider them as products of an unsound mind. St. Simon never was insane, although his doings and his doctrines were far more eccentric than those of Comte. And the same may be said of many other prophets whom our century has produced, such as the high-priest of Mormonism, and Schönherr the paraclet, and the two reverend gentlemen, Ebel and Diestel, who did and taught strange things in Kant's native town. They were not mad, but had that peculiar frame of mind which seems to mark the maximum of eccentricity to which our mental ellipse can be elongated without becoming parabolic and cometary." Examples of eccentric men.

The Ampères, father and son, were extremely absent-minded and unpractical. The Ampères absent-minded. Hamerton, in "Modern Frenchmen," tells us that Jean Jacques Ampère suffered from temporary suspensions of mental power. The most astonishing stories, well authenticated, remain to testify to his singular incapacity for attending to the affairs of com-

Ampère as a
butler.

mon life. His father's household was very badly managed at all times ; and it needed all the respect felt by his guests for such distinguished scientific talents to enable them to pardon the roughness and want of form in his hospitality. On his return from Italy in 1824, Jean Jacques was determined to show how useful he could make himself as a butler, so he went to the cellar to fetch wine, but found that the key would not turn in the lock. He had another key made, and things went on very well for some time, when, lo ! one day he observed that the stock of wine was diminishing with a rapidity which suddenly surprised him. The day following, to his still greater surprise, the empty bins were full again : yesterday, only twenty-five bottles could be counted ; to-day, several hundreds ! He rushes up-stairs to tell the wondrous tale—two witnesses go down with him to confirm it—they count hundreds of bottles !

His queer
mistake.

The explanation was that Jean Jacques had with the most perfect innocence got a key made to open the door of a neighbor's well-stocked cellar, while he kept the old

key of their own, thus going one day (just as it might happen) to the meagre Ampère stock, and another helping himself freely to the more abundant supplies of a neighbor and tenant called Fresnel. "I ought to have been tried for it at the assizes," said poor Jean Jacques ; but the affair was hushed up, and restitution made."

He did worse than this, if possible, in Rome, in 1862, where he became a house-breaker ^{Ampère a house-breaker.} *avec effraction*. It was in the month of March, at two o'clock in the morning ; so he took a fancy to smoke a cigar on his balcony. The night was dark, and the wind high : he believed that he had turned the key in his glass-door to prevent it from slamming behind him. After walking and smoking on the balcony a quarter of an hour, he thought he would go in again ; but the door was completely shut against him, and no key to be found ! In order not to pass the night on the balcony, he boldly takes the resolution to break a pane of glass, so as to get at the inside handle : this done, he enters and strikes a light, when, lo ! he is not in his own apartment at all, but in the

bedroom belonging to some neighbor—the bed, most fortunately, unoccupied. His own door was wide open all the time!

Anecdote of
the elder
Ampère.

This absence of mind may have been hereditary, for André Ampère (the great mathematician) had it in a still worse degree, as a hundred legends tell. One of the best of these is that he once at a cabstand began to calculate with a piece of chalk on the back of a stationary vehicle; and when the cabman took a fare and drove away at the usual slow pace of the French *fiacre*, the philosopher, not to be interrupted by so little, ran after it unconsciously, and (in a double sense) *pursued* his calculation.

Was Dr.
Johnson in-
sane?

This is amusing, but no proof of insanity. There are stronger evidences given by Madden in his "Infirmities of Genius" of the insanity of many of our beacon-lights of English literature. Dr. Johnson, for instance, who was superstitious, eccentric, absent-minded, at times a miserable hypochondriac, always dreading insanity, saying, "I have been mad half my life, at least not sober:" and there is no sadder picture in all literature than that of Charles and Mary Lamb

Charles and
Mary Lamb.

taking the fearful strait-jacket and walking hand-in-hand across the fields to the asylum.

Shelley was at times mad outright, and Byron's blood was deeply tainted with maniacal infusion. His uncle, the fifth lord,^{The fifth Lord Byron.} had been the homicide of his kindred, and hid his remorse in the dismal cloisters of Newstead, a most eccentric, passionate man. Killing his neighbor and kinsman after a foolish quarrel on some frivolous subject, he became a recluse, shunned by all. He hung the bloody sword with which he murdered Mr. Chaworth from the tester of his bed, that the sight of it should forever sting his conscience ; chased wild boars by day, and tamed crickets on his solitary hearth at night. Byron said that his ancestor's only companions were these crickets, that used to^{His strange companions.} crawl over him, receive stripes with straws when they misbehaved, and on his death made an exodus in procession from the house. His wife stated her belief, and that of her advisers, that "Lord Byron was actually insane," and she found thirteen instances of absolutely insane conduct in him

during their short companionship. In Dr. Millingen's book these words are attributed to the author and original of Childe Harold :

Lord Byron's
melancholy
anticipa-
tions.

"I picture myself slowly expiring on a bed of torture, or terminating my days like Swift.—a grinning idiot." He also said : "I have often *wished* for insanity—for anything to quell memory, the never-dying worm that feeds on my heart." And he exclaimed in agony of remorse :

"Oh, memory torture me no more,
The present's all o'ercast,
My hopes of future joy are o'er,
In mercy veil the past."

Character as
drawn by
himself.

Himself the dark original he drew, he loved to paint his character as worse than it was, and mystify everything about himself ; hysterical, apoplectic, epileptic, as was Cæsar and Napoleon, with occasional paroxysms of rage which caused him to faint. He speaks of his brain :

"In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of fantasy and flame."

Thackeray
on Swift.

Then let us recall Swift, as depicted by Thackeray's powerful pen. "He goes thro'

life tearing like a man possessed of a devil. Like Abudah in the Arabian story, he is always looking out for the Fury, and knows that the night will come, and the inevitable hag with it. What a night, my God, it was ! What a lonely rage and long agony ! what a vulture that tore the heart of that giant !” He died a solitary idiot in the hands of servants, so mad as to be behind bars and have his meat thrown in to him as to a savage beast, bequeathing most of his property to a hospital for lunatics and idiots,

“To show by one satiric touch
No nation needed it so much.”

Collins became insane in his last days, and used to go often to play on the cathedral organ at Chichester, accompanying the music with sobs and moans. In his lucid intervals he composed exquisite fancies.

Robert Burton, author of “Anatomy of Melancholy,” was insane at times. So was Pascal, who often started from his chair at the appearance of a fiery gulf at his side.

Newton was decidedly insane when he wrote his Comment on Revelation ; even

Collins, Burton, and others.

Newton,

Luther. Luther threw an inkstand at the Devil's head.

Rousseau's phantom. Tasso saw spirits gliding on a sunbeam, and many other extraordinary sights. Rousseau had a phantom that scarcely quitted him for a day. He imagined enemies everywhere, and a general conspiracy against him. Carlyle says of Rousseau: "Poor Jean Jacques, half sage, half maniac" (Carlyle, by the way, seemed to regard most of his contemporaries as lunatics, fools, or bores, and was so odd, unreasonable, cross, and pessimistic—a combination, as Dr. John Lord puts it, of Diogenes, Jeremiah, and Dr. Johnson—that to impartial observers he appears a little "off").

Carlyle's cross temper. Mr. Sully's observations on Carlyle. Mr. Sully observes: "Carlyle compels the attentive reader to propound to himself anew the long-standing puzzle, 'Is genius something wholly normal and sane?' For there is surely a suggestion of temporary mental unsoundness in the idea of that lonely wanderer through the crowded streets of London suddenly seeing in the figures he met so many spectres, and feeling himself to be but another 'ghastly phantom haunted by

demons.' And if all anger is a sort of madness, it is but natural that one should see something of a momentary mania in those terrible outbursts of a spirit of revolt against all things which now and again made desolate the Chelsea home, and wrung from the sage's wife the humiliating confession that she felt as if she were 'keeper in a mad-house.' "

Mrs. Carlyle's confession.

Hallucinations rarely occur in the case of healthy minds, but with men of genius they have been of common occurrence, auditory (the hearing of imaginary voices), as occurred to Malebranche, Descartes, and Johnson; or visual, much more numerous.

Hallucinations frequent in men of genius.

The bravest soldiers have not been exempt, from Brutus to Napoleon, who had frequent visits from his guardian spirit or genius.

Soldiers not exempt.

Sir Joshua Reynolds said that when walking abroad after a morning's work at his art, the trees seemed to him like men walking. Benvenuto Cellini had many of these experiences, as he relates in his autobiography. Byron and Goethe had similar visions. Pope once saw an arm come out

Strange delusions of Joshua Reynolds and others.

of a wall and asked his physician whose arm it was. Richelieu, whose sister was a lunatic, had an attack of derangement, during which he imagined he was a horse and ran neighing around a billiard-table.

Shelley a
somnambu-
list.

Shelley was all his life a somnambulist, and his hallucinations were extremely real to him. His imagination preponderated over judgment and reason, and he believed events to have occurred to himself which, according to the testimony of his dearest friends, had never happened.

Mr. Symonds, in his "Life of Shelley," gives the following strange story: "The Shelleys were suddenly driven away from Tanyralt by a mysterious occurrence, of which no satisfactory explanation has yet been given. According to letters written by himself and Harriet, soon after the event, and confirmed by the testimony of Eliza, Shelley was twice attacked upon the night of February 24th by an armed ruffian, with whom he struggled in a hand-to-hand combat. Pistols were fired and windows broken, and Shelley's nightgown was shot through; but the assassin made his escape

from the house without being recognized. His motive and his personality still remain matters of conjecture. Whether the whole affair was a figment of Shelley's brain, rendered more than usually susceptible by laudanum taken to assuage intense physical pain, whether it was a perilous hoax played upon him by the Irish servant, Daniel Hill, or whether, as he himself surmised, the crime was instigated by an unfriendly neighbor, it is impossible to say. Strange adventures of this kind, blending facts and fancy in a now inextricable tangle, are of no unfrequent occurrence in Shelley's biography. On the whole, it appears most probable that Shelley on that night was the subject of a powerful hallucination." Figment or hoax?

Hogg, in his well-known "Life of Shelley," relates the following strange story :

"In a crowded stage-coach Shelley once happened to sit opposite an old woman with very thick legs, who, as he imagined, was afflicted with elephantiasis, an exceedingly rare and most terrible disease, in which the legs swell and become as thick as those of an elephant, together with many other dis- Shelley's odd delusion.

Shelley
fancies him-
self infected.

tressing symptoms, as the thickening and cracking of the skin, and indeed a whole Iliad of woes, of which he had recently read a formidable description in some medical work, that had taken entire possession of his fanciful and impressible soul. The patient, quite unconscious of her misery, sat dozing quietly over against him. He also took it into his head that the disease was very infectious, and that he had caught it of his corpulent and drowsy fellow-traveller. I never saw him so thoroughly unhappy as he was, whilst he continued under the influence of this strange and unaccountable impression. His female friends tried to laugh him out of this preposterous whim. He did not relish or even understand their jokes, and sighed deeply. A skilful surgeon assured him that no trace of elephantiasis could be discerned; that it was almost unknown in this part of the world; that it was not infectious; that a person really afflicted with it could not travel in a crowded coach. He was perpetually examining his own skin and feeling and looking at that of others. One evening he actually arrested the danc-

ing of a line of pretty young ladies, proceeding to examine their arms and necks with such woe-begone gravity that they were terrified, and their angry partners silent. The monstrous delusion continued several days. With the aspect of grim despair he came stealthily and opened the bosom of my shirt several times a day, and minutely inspected my skin, shaking his head, and by his distressed mien plainly signifying that he was not by any means satisfied with the state of my health. He also quietly drew up my sleeves, and by rubbing it investigated the skin of my arms; also measured my legs and ankles, spanning them with a convulsive grasp. . . . This strange fancy continued to afflict him for several weeks, and to divert, or distress, his friends; and then it was forgotten as suddenly as it had been taken up, and gave place to more cheerful reminiscences or forebodings."

His delusion lasts several days.

During his last days the intense stirring of his imagination implied by supreme poetic effort, the solitude of Villa Magni, and the elemental fervor of Italian heat to

Shelley's
visions.

which he recklessly exposed himself, contributed to make Shelley more than usually nervous. His somnambulism returned and he saw visions. On one occasion he thought that the dead Allegra rose from the sea, and clapped her hands and laughed, and beckoned to him. On another, he roused the whole house at night by his screams, and remained terror-frozen in the trance produced by an appalling vision. This mood he communicated in some measure to his friends. One of them saw what she afterward believed to have been his phantom, and another dreamed that he was dead. They talked much of death, and it is noticeable that the last words written to him by Jane were these :

“Are you going to join your friend Plato?”

Intended
tragedy on
Tasso.

In one of his letters he writes : “I shall devote this summer, and indeed the next year, to the composition of a tragedy on the subject of Tasso’s madness, which, I find upon inspection, is, if properly treated, admirably dramatic and poetical.”

At times he seriously contemplated put-

ting a sudden end to his own life, and wrote in 1822 to his intimate friend Trelawney : Shelley contemplating suicide. "You, of course, enter into society at Leghorn ; should you meet with any scientific person capable of preparing prussic acid or the essential oil of bitter almonds, I should regard it as a great kindness if you would procure me a small quantity. It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated. I would give any price for this medicine. You remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it ; my wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest."

It is pathetic to read his own account of Keats suffering from Gifford's sharp criticism of his poems. He writes : "Poor Keats was thrown into a dreadful state of mind by this review, which, I am persuaded, was not written with any intention of producing the Keats "killed by a review."

effect, to which it has at least greatly contributed, of embittering his existence, and inducing a disease from which there are now but faint hopes of his recovery.

"The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun. He is coming to pay me a visit in Italy ; but I fear that unless his mind can be kept tranquil, little is to be hoped from the mere influence of climate."

Shelley's
picture of
himself.

Shelley in his elegy on the death of Keats gives this picture of himself :

"'Midst others of less note came one frail form,
A phantom amongst men, companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness
Actæon-like ; and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey."

The following curious ghost story respecting Shelley was related by Byron to Captain Medwin, after his death : Ghost story about Shelley.

“Shortly before his fatal voyage to Leghorn, the inhabitants of the country-house at San Lorenzo were alarmed at midnight by piercing shrieks. They rushed out of their bedrooms, and found Shelley in his saloon with his eyes wide open, and gazing on vacancy as though he beheld some spectre. On waking him, he related that he had had a vision. He thought that a figure wrapped in a mantle came to his bedside and beckoned to him. He got up and followed it; when in the hall, the phantom lifted up the hood of his cloak, showed Shelley the phantasm of himself, and, saying ‘Siete soddisfatto?’ vanished. Shelley sees a phantasm of himself.

“Shelley had been reading a strange drama, which is supposed to have been written by Calderon, entitled ‘El Embozado, ó el Encapotado.’ It is so scarce that Washington Irving told me he had sought for it without success in several of the public libraries of Spain. The story is that a kind of Cipriano or Faust is through life thwarted in all his

Plot of the
drama.

plans for the acquisition of wealth, or honor, or happiness, by a masked stranger, who stands in his way like some Alastor or evil spirit. He is at length in love ; the day is fixed for his marriage, when the unknown contrives to sow dissension between him and his betrothed, and to break off the match. Infuriate with his wrongs, he breathes nothing but revenge, but all his attempts to discover his mysterious foe prove abortive ; at length his persecutor appears of his own accord. When about to fight, the Embozado unmasks, and discovers the phantasm of himself, saying, ‘Are you satisfied?’ The hero of the play dies with horror.

“This play had worked strongly on Shelley’s imagination, and accounts for the awful scene at San Lorenzo.”

Coleridge’s
definition of
madness.

I will add to this Coleridge’s definition of madness. “When a man mistakes his thoughts for persons and things he is mad.” He also said : “Madness is not simply a bodily disease. It is the sleep of the spirit with certain conditions of wakefulness ; that is to say, lucid intervals. During this sleep

or recession of the spirit, the lower or bestial states of life rise up into action and prominence. It is an awful thing to be eternally tempted by the perverted senses. The reason may resist for a long time—it does resist for a long time ; but too often, at length, it yields for a moment, and the man is mad forever. An act of the will is, in many instances, precedent to complete insanity. I think it was Bishop Butler who said that he was all his life struggling against the devilish suggestions of his senses which would have maddened him if he had relaxed the stern wakefulness of his reason for a single moment.”

Coleridge himself was a striking instance of great genius shadowed by procrastination, disease, and opium. Southey wrote of him : “ His mind is in a perpetual St. Vitus’s dance. Eternal activity without action. At times he feels mortified that he should have done so little, but this feeling never produces any exertion. ‘ I will begin to-morrow,’ he says, and thus he has been all his life long letting to-day slip.”

Coleridge's
genius and
idiosyncra-
sies.

Some one called him “ a great perhaps ; ”

His flow of
talk.

another, "a damaged archangel." It is a dreary story of slow self-destruction. When he determined to place himself under Mr. Gillman's care, he wrote to him of "a specific madness." His marvellous flow of talk was not always intelligible. Rogers relates how he and Wordsworth called on him one forenoon. "He talked uninterruptedly for about two hours, during which Wordsworth listened to him with profound attention, every now and then nodding his head as if in assent. On quitting the lodging I said to Wordsworth, 'Well, for my own part I could not make head or tail of Coleridge's oration; pray, did you understand it?' 'Not one syllable of it,' was Wordsworth's reply."

His landlady at Highgate said that when he began there was no stopping him. Whenever she returned to the room, she said, after leaving it for a short time, he would still be "going on," and sometimes made such a noise that she wished him further.

Eccentricities of De
Quincey.

Mr. Fields, in his lecture on De Quincey, said: "He evinced the double eccentricity

of genius and opium, kept his money in his hat and his manuscript in a bathing-tub, and otherwise was guilty of strange things." Mr. Page tells us of these strange things in detail. If a thought occurred to him in the midst of his irregular processes of dressing or undressing, he would stop with his coat just taken off or not put on, without stockings at all, or with one off and one on, and would work for hours, forgetting his soup or coffee. If visitors came—and there were many admirers who made long pilgrimages to see the wonderful little man—he would appear at once, regardless of his toilet.

He had a queer habit of accumulating his precious papers till he was "snowed up," which meant that there was not a square inch on the table to set a cup upon, that there was no possibility of making his bed for the weight of papers there, that no chair could be used for its legitimate purpose, and that the track from the door to the fireplace had been blotted out, even for his careful treading; *then* he locked the door and departed. At his death there were six such places "snowed up."

"Snowed up" by his papers.

De Quincey's habits.

Three times in Westmoreland he actually built his daughters out of their home with his ever accumulating books. He had also a quaint trick of carrying off every scrap of paper he could lay his hands on.

His daughter says : " He was not a reassuring man for nervous people to live with, as those nights were exceptions on which he didn't set something on fire, the commonest incident being for some one to look up from work or book to say casually, ' Papa, your hair is on fire ! ' of which a calm, ' Is it, my love ? ' and a hand rubbing out the blaze was all the notice taken."

His opium dreams.

Mathews, in his " Hours with Men and Books," gives a vivid picture of De Quincey's opium dreams. " Of the cup of horrors which opium finally presents to its devotees De Quincey drank to the dregs, especially in his dreams at night ; when the fearful and shadowy phantoms that flitted by his bedside made his sleep insufferable by the terror and anguish they occasioned. Sometimes they are blended with appalling asseverations, encompassed with the power of darkness or shrouded with the mysteries

of death and the gloom of the grave. Now they are pervaded with unimaginable horrors of Oriental imagery and mythological tortures ; the dreamer is oppressed with tropical heat and vertical sunlight, and brings together all the physical prodigies of China and Hindostan. He runs into pagodas and is fixed for centuries at the summit or in the secret rooms ; he flees from the wrath of Brahma through all the forests of Asia ; Vishnu hates him ; Seeva lays wait for him ; he comes suddenly on Isis and Osiris ; he has done a deed, they say, at which the ibis and the crocodile tremble ; he is buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes ; in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. He is kissed with cancerous kisses by crocodiles, and laid, confounded with all the unutterable, slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.”

Oriental
imagery.

It may be urged that these are merely opium phantasies and have nothing to do with the theme. But I believe that no one but a genius could have such dreams, and the “Opium Eater” says himself : “Over

Strange
character of
his dreams.

every form and threat and punishment, and dim, sightless incarceration, brooded a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness."

There was "a cursed crocodile" that especially pursued him. "I was compelled to live with him, and for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses with cane tables, etc. All the feet of the tables, sofas, etc., soon became instinct with life; the abominable head of the crocodile and his leering eyes looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions; and I stood loathing and fascinated."

As we wandered from hallucinations to Coleridge and his friend, it is fortunate that the crocodile brings us back once more to the subject. Shy, sensitive, morbid Cowper often received a most unpleasant visitor bearing sentence of eternal misery. His was a case of religious monomania. The fact that he must undergo an examination for a clerkship so preyed upon his mind that melancholy at last became madness and death seemed better than the prospect before him.

Cowper a
religious
monoma-
niac.

For six months he tried to prepare ; but he read without understanding. He wrote of himself : "The feelings of a man when he arrives at the place of execution are probably much like mine every time I set my foot in the office. In this situation, such a fit of passion has sometimes seized me, when alone in my chambers, that I have cried out aloud and cursed the hour of my birth, lifting up my eyes to heaven, not as a suppliant, but in the hellish spirit of rancorous reproach and blasphemy against my Maker." He tried to kill himself in various ways. His brother, terrified at his condition, placed him in a private asylum at St. Albans, where he remained eighteen months, enduring mental agonies which words fail to interpret. Some verses composed while there show his state of mind.

Distress over
an expected
examination.

" Hatred and vengeance, my eternal portion,
Scarce can endure delay of execution ;
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my
Soul in a moment !

His agony
expressed in
verse.

Man disavows and Deity disowns me ;
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter ;
Therefore Hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
Bolted against me ! "

It was a review of the interpositions of Providence to save him from committing suicide which led him to write :

“God moves in a mysterious way.”

Unwise excitement on religious themes.

Religious excitement under the guidance of the Rev. John Newton, who insisted on his taking an active part in the prayer-meetings, and going with him to the bed of the dying sinner, thus keeping the poor man in a constant state of anxiety and trepidation, produced decided insanity again, and three years passed before the cloud was removed.

Strange to say, “John Gilpin” was written in one of his saddest moods.

Taine on Cowper.

Taine says : “He smiled as well as he could, but with effort ; it was the smile of a sick man who knows himself miserable and tries to forget it for an instant, at least to make others forget it.” And Cowper said : “I wonder that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellect, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if harlequin should intrude himself

into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state."

And how touching is this :

"I have the thorn without the rose ;
My brier is a wintry one ;
The flowers are withered, but the thorn remains."

He was perhaps the most thoroughly unhappy of all the children of genius. Taine is right when he declares that the difference between a madman and a man of genius is not very great. Napoleon, who knew men, said so to Esquirol. The same faculty leads us to glory or throws us into a cell of a lunatic asylum. It is visionary imagination which forges the phantoms of the madman and creates the personages of an artist, and the classifications serving for the first may serve for the second.

The imagination of Dickens is like that of monomaniacs. To plunge one's self into an idea, to be absorbed by it, to see nothing else, to repeat it under a hundred forms, to enlarge it, to carry it thus enlarged to the eye of the spectator, to dazzle and overwhelm him with it, to stamp it upon him so

Taine and
Napoleon on
men of
genius.

The imagi-
nation of
Dickens.

tenaciously and impressively that he can never tear it from his memory—these are the great features of this imagination and style. In this “David Copperfield” is a masterpiece.

Hallucinations in the history of religions.

Hallucinations have played a conspicuous rôle in the history of religions, especially in the Orient, where they were brought on by exhaustion due to ascetic practices. Mahomet, it has been affirmed, was an epileptic, subject to vivid hallucinations, and the visions of Swedenborg the mystic also had their origin in a morbid cerebral condition, inherited from his father, who had the same hallucinations at the same age, though not with the same frequency as his son.

Swedenborg : his visits to Heaven and Hell.

It may seem almost blasphemy to his faithful followers to speak of this Seer and Savior, as he is regarded, as a victim of disease. His teachings also have had such a beneficent influence on the life and character of his disciples that it is certainly wise for them to place implicit faith in his frequent visits to heaven and hell, his every-day talk with angels and demons, and his wild dreams, with their correspondential significance,

which to some slow of belief seemed strongly like attacks of nightmare.

These hallucinations, continued without interruption for twenty-seven years, must be regarded either as a species of insanity, or he was really allowed daily intercourse with other worlds, such as has been given to no other human being.

He was undoubtedly a clairvoyant and a spiritualist. He said: "It has been granted me to converse with some who lived seventeen centuries ago, and whose lives are well known from the writings of that period." After reading his reason for melancholy, the phrase, "I've got the blue devils," when dyspepsia is gnawing the vitals, seems doubly correct. He said, "It has also been granted me to know the origin of anxiety, grief of mind, and interior sadness, called melancholy, wherewith man is afflicted. There are certain spirits who are not yet in conjunction with hell, because they are as yet in their first state. These love undigested and malignant substances, *such as meats in a state of corruption in the stomach.* Therefore, they are present where there are

Sweden-
borg a clair-
voyant and
spiritualist.

Sweden-
borg on the
origin of mel-
ancholy.

A new origin
for dyspep-
sia.

Similarity to modern spiritualism and its manifestations. such things in man, because these are delightful to them, and there they convene with one another from their own evil affection." Swedenborg was permitted to receive sheets of paper "from heaven" covered with writing or printed characters, or numbers written in order.

His vision in a London tavern.

A critic in the "Westminster Review" says of Swedenborg: "In 1743 a foreign gentleman of great acquirements and active life was sitting in a private room in a London tavern, after a dinner which he had eaten with great appetite, when suddenly a mist overspread his eyes, and the floor became covered, as he thought, with reptiles, such as serpents, toads, and the like. By degrees the darkness for a certain time increased, but when it had passed away he heard a voice saying: 'Eat not so much.' A man sat in the corner of the room. Next night the same man was seen, saying: 'I am God, the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer of the world. I have chosen thee to unfold to man the spiritual sense of the Holy Scriptures. I will myself dictate to thee what thou shalt write.' The result was a belief in his own inspiration,

Wise advice:
"Eat not so much!"

and some forty volumes in Latin, to this day a lasting, powerful influence over many intelligent thinking people who find his faith most comfortable and reasonable, if not inspired ; while the majority consider him a learned lunatic, for in spite of his erudition and eloquence, his mind was undoubtedly diseased.”

His influence
over thinking
people.

“Swedenborg,” says Ingersoll, “was a man of great intellect, of vast acquirements, and of honest intentions ; and I think it equally clear that upon one subject, at least, his mind was touched, shattered, and shaken. Misled by analogies, imposed upon by the bishop, deceived by the woman, borne to other worlds upon the wings of dream, living in the twilight of reason and the dawn of insanity, he regarded every fact as a patched and ragged garment, with a lining of the costliest silk, and insisted that the wrong side even of the silk was far more beautiful than the right.”

Ingersoll on
Sweden-
borg.

A gentleman of Amsterdam gives some remarkable stories. “I cannot forbear to tell you something new about Swedenborg. Last Thursday I paid him a visit, and found

Remarkable
stories about
Sweden-
borg.

him, as usual, writing. He told me that he had been in conversation that same morning for three hours with the deceased king of Sweden. He had seen him already on Wednesday; but, as he observed that he was deeply engaged in conversation with the *queen, who is still living*, he would not disturb him. I allowed him to continue, but at length asked him how it was possible for a person who is still in the land of the living to be met with in the world of spirits. He replied that it was not the queen herself, but her familiar spirit. He then informed me that man has either his good or bad spirit, who is not only constantly with him, but sometimes a little removed from him, and appears in the world of spirits. But of this the man still living knows nothing; the spirit, however, everything. The familiar spirit has everything in accordance with his companion upon earth; he has, in the world of spirits, the same figure, the same countenance, and the same tone of voice, and wears also similar garments. In order to allay my astonishment, he added that Dr. Ernesti, of Leipsic, had appeared

Sweden-
borg on fa-
miliar spirits.

to him in a similar manner in the world of spirit, and that he had held a long disputation with him. What will this learned professor say when he hears of it?" I can only say that, allowed such unusual privileges, it is not strange that a man seemed a little off his balance, or in his second childhood, to those to whom the invisible and supernatural were still a matter of conjecture.

Common-sense view of Swedenborg.

(Picture the double or familiar of Dr. Mary Walker coming to converse with any one of us!)

Everything revealed to us by Swedenborg about heaven is of such a delightful and comforting nature that it is most pleasant to accept. One language there—beautiful home, every garden a paradise, shining garments, lofty thoughts—and, above all, "to grow old in heaven is to grow young." What woman would not be a willing convert?

A comforting anticipation for women.

Coleridge appreciated the genius of this phenomenon, as moralist, psychologist, naturalist, and theologian, and said, "Much of what is most valuable in the physiosophic

Coleridge's appreciation of Swedenborg.

works of Schelling, Schubart, and Eschenmeyer is to be found anticipated in this supposed *Dementato*, or madman. O, thrice happy should we be, if the learned and the teachers of the present age were gifted with a similar madness—a madness, indeed, celestial, and flowing from a divine mind.”

His scientific works.

These treatises were, I think, composed previous to his climacteric and the peculiar power which came to him at fifty.

He sometimes went to church, but had no peace, on account of spirits, who contradicted what the preacher said, especially when he spoke of the three persons of the Godhead.

The apostles visiting Swedenborg.

A gentleman who called upon him reports that upon greeting him he pointed to the opposite side of the table, and said: “Just now the Apostle Peter was here, and stood there; and it is not long since all the Apostles were with me; indeed, they often visit me.”

He did not know of the death of his own sister, but explains “that of such cases he had no knowledge, since he did not desire to know them.”

God may have granted to Swedenborg a special passport to other worlds—it is a solitary, and, if real, a sublime instance of Divine favor. Socrates, also, believed that he was taught by some divine power.

It is supposed by Tasso's admirers that, ^{Tasso's insanity.} like Hamlet, he feigned madness. But he believed in the supernatural agency of his tormentor. "Things become even worse, because the devil, with whom I walk and sleep, not being able to master me as he wishes, has become a manifest thief of my money, taking it from me while I am asleep, and opening my boxes so that I cannot keep it safe. Heretofore he has robbed me discreetly, but not being able to trust his continuing to do so, I send you the rest."

His "folletto," of whom he complains ^{His "folletto."} constantly, seems to be a sort of sprite, Puck, or Robin Goodfellow. He adds, beside the wonders of the folletto he had many nocturnal frights. "I seem to behold small flames in the air, and sometimes my eyes flash fire in such a way that I dread the loss of sight; and I have actually seen sparks of fire issue from them. I have also

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Tasso a possible sufferer from catarrh!

seen in the middle of the bed-tester shadows of rats, which it was naturally impossible should be there. I have heard dreadful noises, and there is often hissing, tingling, ticking like a clock, and ringing of bells in my ears." (These sound like the distressing evidences of stoppage of the Eustachian tubes from severe catarrh!) "Often the hour is struck, and sometimes in my sleep it seems as if a horse fell upon me, and I afterward found myself languid and fatigued."

These may all have been illusions and phantasms, without positive insanity.

His unhappy passion.

He was the victim of an unhappy and misplaced passion for the Duchess Eleonora d'Este, and lovers are generally somewhat insane. She received all his flattery and adoration, but was utterly cold and selfish, and made no effort to release him from prison, where, long confined, he became in reality a madman.

The blank, implacable silence with which she received his cries from prison chills and oppresses one after three centuries.



CHAPTER II.

MONSIEUR MOREAU, in developing his theory, contends for the essential identity of the organic conditions that constitute the starting point of insanity and other cerebral affections, and of those on which depend such considerable deviations from the ordinary line of thought, as ecstasy, theosophy, mysticism, and all the various forms of religious and political fanaticism. Hitherto our philosophers have been disposed to assign the origin of some of these to high mental endowments, worthy perhaps of admiration and imitation, while the subjects of them have been held up on the historian's page among the shining lights in the pathway of the race.

In such characters as St. Theresa and Madame Guyon, the psychological observer, while rendering homage to their exalted

The theory
of M. Moreau.

St. Theresa
and Madame
Guyon.

aspirations, discerns beneath an abnormal excitation of the nerve-cells of the brain very different from that kind and degree of excitation which attend unqualified health.

Religious ecstasy, and the phenomena of insanity.

Those raptures which absorb all the faculties of the soul and defy all control, that intimate communion with the great objects of human worship which spurns all the bonds of flesh and sense, that divine afflatus which breathes into every pore and fills every channel of their spiritual being—all these are remarkably like the phenomena of insanity, and are undoubtedly derived from the same nervous condition.

Founders of religious systems.

The fact signifies nothing derogatory to this class of endowments, beyond denying to them a supernatural origin. Like all other mental manifestations, they are connected with certain physical conditions which present to our apprehension no grades of honor or dishonor. In the founders of religious systems that have swept whole communities with their embrace—the Mahomets, Joe Smiths, and many whose names the world is not yet willing to see in such a connec-

tion—we discern the influence of a like psychological condition.

The mental dispositions which distinguish one man from another by the originality of his thoughts and conceptions, by the eccentricity or energy of his effective faculties, or the transcendency of his intellect, originate in the same organic conditions as those mental troubles of which madness and idiocy are the complete expression.

“The same change in cellular tissue,” says Ray, “which has produced insanity has simultaneously enlarged the power and compass of the notion of an intimate connection between the highest forms of intellectual power, and mental disorder has prevailed so extensively that we can scarcely resist the connection of its being founded on fact.”

Ray, on the connection of intellectual power and mental disorder.

“The extreme mind is near to extreme madness,” says Pascal. “Of what is the most subtle follies made, but of the greatest wisdom?” asks Montaigne. “Genius bears within itself a principle of destruction, of death, of madness,” says Lamartine.

Various great thinkers on the connection of genius and insanity. Pascal. Montaigne.

Lamartine.

“Ten vibrations instead of five may trans-

Broussais. form an ordinary man into a prodigy," says Broussais.

A few of those favored mortals who have achieved illustrious names in literature or art have given us a glimpse of the working of the wondrous mechanism by which the highest forms of thought are evolved, and from that we learn that the process is not entirely independent of physical movements.

Buffon. "Contemplate your subject long," says Buffon, "it will gradually unfold, till a sort of electric spark convulses for a moment the brain and spreads down to the very heart a glow of irritation."

Rousseau. Rousseau tells us that when the first idea of one of his works flashed upon his mind, he experienced a nervous movement that approached to a slight delirium. Descartes heard a voice in the air that called him to pursue the truth.

Instances of writers partially insane. Alex. Cruden. The experience seems very general. Alexander Cruden prepared his Concordance of the Bible while partially insane; he was three times placed in confinement by his friends. He insisted on being called Alexander the *Corrector*, and addressed himself

to the improvement of the public morals, surprised that the Legislature did not formally constitute him Corrector of Morals, carrying in his pocket a large piece of sponge to obliterate all offensive inscriptions on walls, bored all his friends by offering himself as a candidate to represent the city of London in Parliament, until they fairly ran away from him, all but poor Paulett, who was so afflicted with the gout that he could not escape ; yet with all these vagaries Cruden was esteemed, and Chalmers spoke of him as one whose character, " notwithstanding his mental infirmities, we cannot but venerate, whom neither infirmity nor neglect could debase."

Edward Irving and Robert Hall were both temporarily insane. Lord Chatham and Edmund Burke were also alleged to have been insane.

Edward Irving, Robert Hall, Lord Chatham, temporarily insane.

The earliest unmistakable instances of those violent outbreaks which showed the presence of disease were in the debates on the Regency Bill, in February, 1789, when Sir Richard Hill, with brutal candor, hinted at Burke's madness, even in his presence,

Earliest outbreaks of Burke's insanity.

and Sir William Young wrote of this :
"Burke finished his wild speech in a manner next to madness." From that time until his death his intellect became every year more disordered.

Buckle on
Burke.

Revolutions
tend to in-
crease in-
sanity.

All great revolutions have a direct tendency to increase insanity, and Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," writes : "When the French Revolution broke out, the mind of Burke, already fainting under the weight of incessant labor, could not support the contemplation of an event so unprecedented, so appalling, and threatening results of such frightful magnitude. And when the armies of that great revolution, instead of diminishing, continued to increase, then it was that the feelings of Burke finally mastered his reason ; the balance tottered ; the proportions of that gigantic intellect were distended from this moment, his sympathy with present suffering was so intense that he lost all memory of the tyranny by which the sufferings were provoked. His mind, once so steady, so little swayed by prejudice and passion, reeled under the pressure of events which turned the brains of thousands.

And whoever will compare the spirit of his latest works with the dates of their publication will see how this melancholy change was aggravated by that bitter bereavement from which he never rallied. . . .

Character of
his latest
works.

“Never, indeed, can there be forgotten those touching, those exquisite allusions to the death of that only son, who was the joy of his soul, and the pride of his heart, and to whom he fondly hoped to bequeath the inheritance of his imperishable name. Never can we forget that image of desolation under which the noble old man figured—his immeasurable grief. ‘I live in an inverted order. Those who ought to have succeeded me have gone before me. They who should have been to me as posterity, are in the place of ancestors. The storm has gone over me, and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honors; I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth.’”

The death of
his only son.

Edward Everett once gave this pathetic anecdote of Burke, that “in this sad decline of his life, when living in retirement on his

Anecdote of
Burke told
by Everett.

farm at Beaconsfield, the rumor went up to London that he had gone mad, and went round his park kissing his cows and horses. His only son had died not long before, leaving a petted horse, which had been turned into the park and treated as a privileged favorite. Mr. Burke, in his morning walks, would often stop to caress the favorite animal. On one occasion the horse recognized Mr. Burke from a distance, and coming nearer and nearer, eyed him with the most pleading look of recognition, which said as plainly as words could have said, 'I have lost him too!' and then the poor dumb beast deliberately laid his head upon Mr. Burke's bosom. Overwhelmed by the tenderness of the animal, expressed in the mute eloquence of holy Nature's universal language, the illustrious statesman for a moment lost his self-possession, and clasping his arms around his son's favorite animal, lifted up that voice which had caused the arches of Westminster Hall to echo the noblest strains that sounded within them, and wept aloud. Burke is gone, but, sir, so hold me heaven, if I were called upon

Tenderness
of an animal.

to designate the event or the period in Burke's life that would best sustain a charge of insanity, it would not be when, in a gush of the holiest and purest feeling that ever stirred the human heart, he wept aloud on the neck of his dead son's favorite horse!"

Grand old "Christopher North" said of himself, "The whole city of Glasgow think me a madman," and to dull, commonplace folks he must have seemed semi-insane. "Christopher North's" saying about himself.

The Westmoreland peasants thought Wordsworth simple, or bereft of his senses—a little cracked. As he strolled through the woods muttering his wayward fancies, the astonished rustics regarded him with pity because he went "booing around!" Wordsworth and the rustics.

Among the many interesting reminiscences of Bryant's intercourse with the English poets, there is a characteristic anecdote of Rogers. On a visit to London in 1849, Rogers said to him, "Our poets seem to be losing their minds. Campbell's son was in a mad-house, and if the father had been put there, in the last years of his life, it would have been the proper place for him. Bowles became weak-minded, and as for Southey, Bryant meeting with Rogers.

you know what happened to him. Moore was here the other day, and I asked : ' Moore, how long have you been in town ? ' ' Three or four days,' he replied. ' What, three or four days, and not let me know it ? ' ' I beg your pardon,' said he, putting his hand to his forehead, ' I believe I came to town this morning.'

" As to Wordsworth, a gentleman who saw him lately said to me, ' You would not find Wordsworth much changed ; he talks rationally.' "

Sketch of
Wordsworth
in his old
days.

This is apropos : In the summer of 1846, when on a visit to the Lake District, I called upon Mr. Wordsworth to convey a letter to his daughter, then in London. He received me with a kindly shake of the hand. " I am told," said he, " that you write poetry ; but I never read a line of your composition, and don't intend to." I suppose I must have looked surprised, for he added, before I could find time to reply : " You must not think me rude in this, for I never read anybody's poetry but my own, and haven't done so for five-and-twenty years." Doubtless I smiled. " You may think this vanity, but

it is not ; for I only read my own poetry to correct its faults, and make it as good as I can." I endeavored to change the subject by some general remarks on the beauty of the scenery, visible from his garden, in which our interview had taken place. "What is the name of that mountain?" I inquired. "God bless me !" he said, "have you not read my poems? Why, that's Nab Scar. There are frequent allusions to it in my writings. Don't you remember the lines?" and he repeated in a clear, distinct voice a well-known passage from "The Excursion." The name of Southey having been accidentally mentioned, I inquired, as a matter of literary history, whether, as was commonly believed, he had impaired his health and his intellect by too much mental exertion, and thus brought on that comparative darkness of mind which clouded the last months of his life. "By no means," said Wordsworth ; "Southey was a most methodical worker. He systematized his time. He was never confused or in a hurry, and got through a great deal of labor with an amount of ease and comfort which your

Wordsworth
on Southey.

hurry-scurry kind of people can neither accomplish nor understand. The truth is—at least I think so—that his mind was thrown off its balance by the death of his first wife, and never afterward wholly recovered itself.” I reminded him at this point that the late Mr. Laman Blanchard, whose sad story was then fresh in the recollection of the public, had been reduced to a state of insanity by a similar bereavement. From that moment my name seemed to fade away from Mr. Wordsworth’s recollection, and he always addressed me during the remainder of our interview as Mr. Laman Blanchard. His sister, Miss Wordsworth, was wheeled into the garden in a little garden-carriage or chair, impelled by Mr. Wordsworth. I wore on my head a Glengary travelling cap, with a sprig of heather ; and Miss Wordsworth no sooner caught sight of me than she exclaimed, in a shrill voice, “Who’s that man, brother ?” “Oh ! nobody, my dear,” he replied ; “it’s only Mr. Laman Blanchard.” I gently hinted my right name. “It’s all the same to her, poor thing !” he rejoined. He would possibly have said more, but the un-

Wordsworth’s
sister.

fortunate lady interrupted him by commencing to sing the well-known Scotch song—

“A Highland lad my love was born,
The Lowland laws he held in scorn.”

She sang one verse with much correctness and was commencing another when Mr. Wordsworth led me away. “This is a painful scene, Mr. Blanchard,” he said, “let us go into my room, and I will read you some more passages from my poems about Nab-Scar.”

Wordsworth’s impression of the primary cause of Southey’s insanity is now, we believe, admitted by all who knew him intimately.

Southey, as has been said, lost his mind, and during his last years used to grope stupidly about the library, once so dear to him, feeling the backs of the books in an unconscious way. Southey in his last year.

Moore also sank into imbecility and did not recognize his own beautiful melodies, save as we recall dimly some pleasant dream. Thomas Moore.

Landor’s fits of ungovernable rage and Landor’s fits of rage.

his extravagant expressions when disturbed, seemed like the freaks of a madman.

“His son Arnold had had a fever, and Landor writes to his sister, ‘Not receiving any letter at Naples, I was almost mad, for I fancied his illness had returned. I hesitated between drowning myself and going post back.’”

Losing his road to a friend's house, where a party were waiting dinner for him, he startled a country bumpkin by the peremptory demand that he should either at once show him the way or cut his throat on the spot.

His semi-insane intensity about trifles.

Once, after dinner at Gore House, his cravat had become slightly disarranged, and Count D'Orsay laughingly called his attention to it as he rose from table. Landor, flushed and greatly agitated, exclaimed, “I thank you from my soul for pointing out to me the abominable condition to which I am reduced. If I had entered the drawing-room and presented myself before Lady Blessington in so absurd a light, I would have instantly gone home, put a pistol to my head, and blown my brains out!”

Charles Dickens gives this anecdote, and in "Bleak House" he has faithfully sketched the noisy, impetuous, yet lovable Landor as "Lawrence Boythorn."

Sketch of
Landor in
"Bleak
House."

Chatterton, after a three days' fast, spent his last penny for poison, and died with a quantity of torn manuscript all about him. Let us hope the "Marvellous Boy" was insane. His biographer, John Davis, takes this view. Pressed hard by indigence and its companions, gloom and despondency, the mind of Chatterton became disordered, and on the night of August 24, 1770, he swallowed a large dose of arsenic, which caused his death. The verdict of the jury was brought in "insanity," and the body of Chatterton was put into a shell and carried, unwept, unheeded, and unowned, to the burying-ground of the workhouse in Shoe Lane.

Chatterton's
mind disor-
dered.

Jeremy Bentham certainly must be mentioned. "The queerest old man alive." One of his most intimate friends wrote that he was undoubtedly deranged, mad as a March hare upon some subjects, a monomaniac upon others. He kept a relay of young

Bentham,
the queerest
old man
alive.

men, thoroughly trained for the work, to follow him round all day and pick up his droppings, or what his followers call sibylline leaves, bits of paper written all over with cabalistic signs, which no mortal could ever hope to decipher without a long apprenticeship. These leaves he scattered round him right and left, while on the trot through his large beautiful garden, or, if in the house, while taking his 'post-prandial' vibration—the after-dinner walk through a narrow passage-way, running between a raised platform, in what he called his 'workshop' and the outer partition. Here he labored day after day, and year after year, at codification, without stopping to draw a long breath, or even to look up, so afraid was he of what might happen to the world if he should be taken away before it was all finished."

His queer
habits and
mode of life.

In the warmest weather he wore thick leather gloves, and in the coldest a straw hat, bound with the brightest of green ribbons. His walk was a trot which he could keep up for an hour without losing breath or showing signs of weariness, occasionally

shouting at the top of his lungs to show that his wind was sound. He would go after his annuity every year, trotting all the way down and back through Fleet Street with his white hair flowing loose, and followed by one of his secretaries.

Captain Parry represents him as being taken for a lunatic running away from his keepers. He used to sleep in a bag, and sometimes with most of his clothes on. This he did for economy, "It took less of sheeting," he said. He was read to sleep every night by one of his secretaries.

He bequeathed his skeleton to Dr. Southwood Smith, with the request that it should be dressed in the same dress he habitually wore, stuffed out to an exact resemblance of life, with a portrait mask in wax. He sits in the doctor's office, a companion of his studies. The figure leans a little forward, resting the hands on a stout stick which Bentham always carried.

Musicians are usually so irritable, high-strung, sensitive, and eccentric that they are just on the verge of insanity. Think of Beethoven and poor Schumann, who

Singular bequest.

Musicians usually eccentric.

The suicidal impulse common among writers and artists.

threw himself into the Rhine from a window, but was rescued. The suicidal impulse is only another phase and is often seen. Goethe, Alfieri, Raphael, and George Sand struggled against this temptation to self-destruction.

George Sand.

The last, writing of her experience, says, "Cette sensation" (at the sight of water, a precipice, etc.) "fut quelquefois si vive, si bizarre, que je pus bien constater que c'était une espèce de folie dont j'étais atteinte."

Johnson.

Johnson's weariness of life was, it seems certain, only prevented from developing into the idea of suicide by his strong religious feeling and his extraordinary dread of death, which was itself, perhaps, a morbid symptom.

Other instances.

In some cases this idea prompted to actual attempts to take away life. The story of Cowper's trying to hang himself, and afterward experiencing intense religious remorse, is well known. Another instance is that of Saint-Simon, whose enormous vanity itself looks like a form of monomania, and who, in a fit of despondency, fired a pistol at his head, happily with no graver result than

the loss of an eye. Alfieri, who was the victim of the "most horrid melancholy," tried on one occasion, after being bled by a surgeon, to tear off the bandage in order to bleed to death. Among those who succeeded in taking away their life are Kleist, the poet, and Beneke, the philosopher.

William Blake, a most remarkable character, poet, painter, and visionary, believed that he was directly inspired, as do some modern spiritualists, his dead brother revealing to him a secret mechanical process for illustrating his own poems. He drew visionary heads, and was able to summon at will any historical personage whose portrait he wished to take ; even the devil himself would politely sit for Blake and irreverently disappear. He believed in a previous existence, and said to Crabb Robinson, "I was a brother of Socrates and had conversations with him. So I had with Jesus Christ." Homer, Dante, and Milton were frequent visitors, and the angels were continually coming to see him. As he went along a common lane, happiness stretched across the hills to him—

William
Blake, poet,
painter, and
visionary.

“With a blue sky, spread over with wings
 And a mild sun that mounts and sings ;
 With trees and fields full of fairy elves
 And little devils who fight for themselves ;
 With angels planted in hawthorn bowers
 And God himself in the passing hours.”

His manu-
 scripts and
 productive-
 ness.

His manuscripts are immense in quantity. He said : “I have written more than Voltaire or Rousseau, six or seven epic poems as long as Homer, twenty tragedies as long as Macbeth. I write when commanded by the spirits, and the moment I have written I see the words fly about the room in all directions. It is then printed and the spirits can read.” His illustrations for the book of Job are his finest work. Mrs. Jameson said : “The only new and original of the Scripture ideas of angels is that of William Blake—a poet-painter.” He also made fantastic portraits such as “the ghost of a flea,” “the man who built the pyramids,” and “Nebuchadnezzar eating grass.”

Charles
 Lamb on
 Blake.

Charles Lamb wrote : “Blake is a real name, I assure you ; a most extraordinary man he is. He paints in water-colors marvellous strange pictures, visions of his brain

which he asserts he has seen. They have great merit. I must look upon him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age."

His life has been written by Professor Norton, of Harvard, and the late Alexander Gilchrist; there is also a critical essay by Swinburne, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti has contributed some explanations of his odd pictures of great value to those interested in the man.

Swinburne speaks of "the Marriage of Heaven and Hell" as the greatest of all his books, a work indeed which we rank as about the greatest produced by the eighteenth century in the line of high poetry and spiritual speculation; and Mr. Norton adds that there are admirers of Blake whose enthusiasm is not content even with the fervid utterances of Swinburne's impassioned zeal.

He is the best example yet given of the truth of Dryden's couplet—

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

Those who study Blake will find few poets and artists who, like him, to use his own words, make you

“To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.”

Blake and
Whitman
compared.

Nicol, the Scotch critic, says of Whitman in comparison with Blake: “The one (Blake) is a prodigious genius marred by almost insane violence; the other a writer of almost insane violence occasionally redeemed by a touch of genius.”

Shakespeare, who had his decided opinions on every known subject, asserts a degree of affinity between poetic creation and insanity :

Shake-
speare's lines
on poetic
creation and
insanity.

“The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.”

There is a case in Mr. Haslam's “Observations on Insanity,” who assures us that the patient he describes was insane, which will appear strange to those who have watched more poets than lunatics.

"This patient, when admitted, was very noisy and importunately talkative, reciting passages from the Greek and Roman poets, or talking of his own literary importance. He became so troublesome to the other madmen, who were sufficiently occupied with their own speculations, that they avoided and excluded him from the common room ; so that he was at last reduced to the mortified situation of being the sole auditor of his own compositions. He conceived himself very nearly related to Anacreon and possessed of the peculiar vein of that poet." And Disraeli's comments are exquisitely dry : "Such," he says, "is the very accurate case drawn up by a medical writer. I can conceive nothing in it to warrant the charge of insanity. Mr. Haslam, not being a poet, seems to have mistaken the common orgasm of poetry for insanity itself."

Dr. Haslam's poetic patient.

Disraeli's comments.

John Clare was a peasant poet of uncommon ability, who passed the greater part of his life in an asylum. "Poverty is the Muses' patrimony," and Clare's father was a pauper, but the boy earned enough to get

John Clare, the peasant poet.

to school, and as soon as he could write began to rhyme. With an intense love of nature, he says :

“ I found the poems in the fields,
And only wrote them down.”

When he was twenty-five, Mr. Taylor and Octavius Gilchrist, men of influence in literary circles, took an active and genuine interest in the young poet.

Success of
his first
poems.

Clare's first volume was brought out in 1820, “Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery,” and was an immediate and immense success. The eager curiosity of the public led to the first edition being exhausted in a few days, and a second was promptly announced. All the prominent periodicals welcomed the new poet with generous and hearty praise. Even the quarterlies, generally so severe, the Review that “killed poor Keats,” admitted a genial article on the rustic bard. Of course, his verses were the fashion of the hour. One of his poems was set to music and sung by Madame Vestris at Covent Garden. Complimentary letters flowed in upon him,

Praised by
the Reviews.

presents of books were brought by every coach, and various plans were devised to rescue him from enduring poverty. Sir Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, Allan Cunningham, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, James Montgomery, I notice among those who sent valuable books. He was bothered with applications for autographs and poems by ladies, tracts from clergymen, advice from total strangers, and with invitations to be lionized, which he abhorred.

The Dukes of Bedford and Devonshire, Lord John Russell, and Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg were among those who subscribed a total of £420 to be invested for his family. He had delightful letters from Charles Lamb, whom he visited.

Here is a quaint bit from one of Elia's letters. "Since I saw you I have been in France, and I have eaten frogs. The nicest little rabbity things you ever tasted. Do look about for them. Make Mrs. Clare pick off the hind-quarters ; boil them plain with parsley and butter. The fore-quarters are not so good. She may let them hop off by themselves."

A prey to
melancholy.

He suffered from attacks of melancholy for many years, at last they became so frequent and intense as to hopelessly cloud his mind. The story is too painful to be dwelt upon. He became the subject of all kinds of hallucinations. His first love, Mary Joyce, had always been his ideal of love and beauty, and among the first indications of approaching insanity was his declaration that Mary, who had then been long in her grave, had passed by his window.

Under the influence of this delusion he wrote the poem entitled

FIRST LOVE'S RECOLLECTIONS.

First love will with the heart remain
When all its hopes are bye,
As frail rose-blossoms still retain
Their fragrance when they die.
And joys' first dreams will haunt the mind
With shades from whence they sprung,
As summer leaves the stems behind,
On which love's spring blossom hung.

He was classified in the asylum books as "harmless," and for several years was al-

lowed to walk in the fields. Strange to say, in these dark days he was neglected by wife and children. Smarting under this cruelty he wrote three verses of which an eloquent critic has said that, "in their sublime sadness and incoherence, they sum up with marvellous effect the one great misfortune of the poet's life and his mental isolation, and read like the wail of a nature cut off from all access to other minds, concentrated at its own centre, and conscious of the impassable gulf which separates it from usual humanity."

"I am ! yet what I am, who cares, or knows ?

My friends forsake me like a memory lost.

I am the self-consumer of my woes—

They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,

Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost.

And yet I am—I live—though I am tossed

Last, sad
verses.

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,

Into the living sea of waking dream,

Where there is neither sense of life nor joys,

But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem,

And all that's dear. Even those I loved the best,

Are strange, nay they are stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod,
For scenes where woman never smiled or wept,
There to abide with my Creator God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Full of high thoughts, unborn. So let me die,
The grass below, above the vaulted sky."

Disposition
relating to
his grave.

His request as to the position of his grave is full of pathos and poetry: "I wish to lie on the north side of the churchyard, about the middle of the ground, where the morning and evening sun can linger on my grave. I wish to have a rough unhewn stone something in the form of a millstone, so that the playing boys may not break it in their heedless pastimes, with nothing more on it than this, 'Here rest the hopes and ashes of John Clare.'" This wish was gratified.

He constantly wrote poems in the asylum, some very exquisite, others showing traces of mental disease. His biographer writes: "In Clare's case we are tempted to say that the Genius of Poetry laid her fearful hand upon a nature too weak to bear her gifts, and at the same time to master the untoward circumstances in which his lot was cast."

“Nat. Lee” made his first appearance as Nat. Lee. an actor in 1672, as *Duncan* in “Macbeth;” but although, as Cibber says, he was so pathetic a reader of the scenes he had written himself, that he moved old actors to tears, he failed ignominiously as a player and quitted the stage in despair. In 1684, he was “sent to Bedlam,” a cockney contraction for Bethlehem Hospital. Dryden wrote as follows to Dennis: “I remember poor Nat. Lee, who was then upon the very verge of madness, yet made a sober and a witty answer to a bad poet who told him it was an easie thing to write like a madman. ‘No,’ said he, ‘it is very difficult to write like a madman, but it is a very easie matter to write like a fool.’”

Dryden
spelled it
easie.

While in Bedlam, Lee wrote with a key upon the walls of his dungeon some creditable poetry.

A noted alienist in this country told me, when visiting the large asylum which he controlled, that insanity, consumption, and crime seemed interchangeable. What was consumption in one generation, was insanity or special waywardness in the next. And

Infirmities
interchange-
able.

some go farther and believe genius may be added to the list of permutations. With this thought the fateful history of the Brontë family is naturally suggested.

The Brontë family.

In her life of Emily Brontë, Miss Robinson says: "Insanity and genius stand on either side consumption, its worse and better angels. Let none call it impious or absurd to rank the greatest gift to mankind as the occasional result of an inherited tendency to tubercular disease. There are, of course, very many other determining causes. Yet it is certain that inherited scrofulas or phthisis may come out, not only in these diseases, but in an alteration for better or for worse of the condition of the mind. Out of evil may come a good, or a worse evil."

Patrick Brontë.

The father, Rev. Patrick Brontë, could not be called a pleasant, easy-going husband and father. He rivalled Carlyle in being "ill gey to live with." How I pity his delicate young wife, who sat lonely and neglected as he was studying, or, when he did come, bore with patience his stern peremptory manner. He was a passionate brute,

cutting up her favorite silk dress into shreds because he, her lord and master, chose that she should *not* accept a gift ; he threw the children's pretty little shoes into the fire because forsooth he did not fancy the color. Occasionally he would vent his beast-like rage by firing pistol-shots out doors. A union of this semi-insane temperament and the consumptive constitution of his wife, certainly produced genius tinged with sadness.

We have had our "mad poet" in this ^{McDonald} country, McDonald Clark, who wrote that striking couplet :

"Night drew her sable curtain down
And pinned it with a star."

He wrote several volumes of verses as good as from many who have not the excuse of insanity.

Nicol says that Poe was often "sad and ^{Poe.} mad and bad," and like Byron, gloried in his madness and his badness. Let us find in the half insanity of a diseased organism the source and palliation of his errors of

life and frequent unreasonable jealousy. Another writer speaks of the "semi-delirious horror" of some of his poems and odd tales.

Charles
Fenno
Hoffman.

Charles Fenno Hoffman, an editor-poet who started the *Knickerbocker Magazine* and composed that popular song, "Sparkling and Bright," still enjoyed by college boys, was insane for years, and died in an asylum.

Hawthorne's
morbid fan-
cies.

Hawthorne, with his shy, eccentric manner, and weird, morbid fancies, was not exactly healthy and normal in his mental condition. But, as Fontenelle said when told that a favorite author was mad, "I know it, and I am very sorry, but I like him better for being original and a little mad than if he were in his senses without being original." Beecher said the other day that the best thing that could happen to a man was to be just a little crazy.

His life and
habits in
Salem.

G. W. Curtis, in the *North American Review* for October, 1864, wrote: "Hawthorne lived in Salem, 'bleak, hard, scriptural Salem,' for ten years, shunning society, after nightfall stealing out from his room into the

silent streets, shadowy as the ghosts with which the dusky town was haunted ; gliding beneath the house in which the witch trials were held, or across the moonlight hill on which the witches were hung ; and weaving his memories and impressions into his first series of fragmentary romances. These sketches hold the mind with a Lamia-like fascination. There are sunny gleams upon the paper, but a melancholy chill pervades the book. Most of it is bathed in the fateful atmosphere in which the startled heart stands still."

Miss Delia Bacon, who was so befriended by Hawthorne, was a sad instance of genius afflicted with monomania. But I will not dwell upon that class of lunatics who are rendered useless to themselves and an unspeakable bore to others by their persistent adherence to the Shakespeare-Bacon craze. Richard Grant White has settled their proper place and proposed solitary incarceration until the crisis is passed.

This question has a fatal effect on feeble brains, as well as on those that have some claim to genius.

The Shakespeare-Bacon lunatics.

Concluding
quotation
from Father
Prout's
"Reliques."

I know of nothing so appropriate to end this rambling proof of the strong affinity between genius and insanity, as seen in the great minds of the past, "Like sweet bells jangled out of tune," than a touching paragraph from Father Prout's "Reliques :—" "There is something sacred about Insanity ; the traditions of every country agree in flinging a halo of mysterious distinction around the unhappy mortal stricken with so sad and so lonely a visitation. The poet who most studied from nature and least from books, the immortal Shakespeare, has never made our souls thrill with more intense sympathy than when his personages are brought before us bereft of the guidance of reason. The gray hairs of King Lear are silvered over with additional veneration when he raves ; the wild flower of insanity is the tenderest that decks the pure garland of Ophelia. The story of Orestes has furnished Greek tragedy with its most powerful emotions, and never did the mighty Talma sway with more irresistible dominion the assembled men of France, than when he personated the fury-driven maniac of Eurip-

ides, revived on the French stage by the muse of Voltaire. . . . In the palmiest days of Greek and Roman illumination, the Oracles of Delphi found their fitting organ in the frenzy of the Pythoness ; and through such channels does the Latin lyricist represent the Deity communicating with man."





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